



ויקהל - פקודי

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Elevated in the Home

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Part I. Greatness in the Camp

Esoteric Divine Names

As we come to the end of Sefer Shemos we note that it's remarkable how much space was devoted to the details of making the Mishkan and all of its *keilim*. For a few weeks already the *baal korei* has been reading about this subject. We had Terumah and Tetzaveh, parts of Ki Sisa, and now Vayakhel and Pekudei too. Real estate in the Torah, you have to know, is very expensive. And so, if the details of the Mishkan take up more space in the Torah than any other subject, it must be that there's something here, some lessons that we have to understand.

Now, even if we wouldn't bother to try and understand some of the lessons from these *parshiyos*, just the fact that we come to *shul* and listen to words of the Torah, that itself is a tremendous achievement. The Torah is not merely what we think it is, just words that we read. The

kadmonim tell us that the whole Torah is *tzirufei sheimos*; Hakadosh Baruch Hu planned it so that the words of the Torah spell out His names in various combinations. And when the *baal korei* gets up and he reads the words he creates a certain entity, a spiritual entity, that enters into existence.

In one of the *seforim* written by the Mesillas Yesharim it says that when you listen to *kriyas hatorah* the words of the Torah are lifted off the *sefer Torah* by the mouth of the *baal korei*, and they enter your ears and to your mind and your soul. The words are not just words; they're alive and they have an effect on you.

And so, even if you haven't yet discovered the utilitarian purpose of a certain word or *possuk* in these *parshiyos* that describe how the Am Yisroel built the Mishkan, you can rest assured that it's fulfilling some spiritual purpose. Every letter of the Torah is put there intentionally and just by reading the words a certain spiritual achievement is achieved.

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The Entire Assembly

Now even though this is just as true as any other concept we'll learn, it is a mysterious concept and we'll leave that idea for now; we won't say any more about the *sisrei Torah*, about the mysterious things that we don't understand. Instead, we'll try to understand the *parshiyos* of the Mishkan on a simpler level; something, a lesson that we can take home with us.

Now, I'm sure that there are many lessons; the Torah is very deep after all. But there's one idea that I think is overlooked; and it's repeated so many times, it's stressed so much, that I believe it's one of the more important ideas of these *parshiyos*.

What is it? כָּל עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *the entire assembly of the Bnei Yisroel!* (Vayakhel 35:4,20). I'm sorry if you were expecting something more, but that's it! We shouldn't overlook the fact that building the Mishkan was a national project.

כָּל נְדִיב לְבוֹ – *Everybody who wanted to contribute did so* (ibid. 5). וַיָּבֵאוּ כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נָשְׂאוֹ לְבוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר נָדְבָהּ – *Anyone whose heart inspired him and everyone whose spirit motivated him.* (ibid. 21). וַיָּבֵאוּ וַיָּבֵאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עִל הַנָּשִׁים – *The men came with the women* (ibid. 22). It means nobody stayed home! If the men came with the women so the children didn't stay home alone; they came along.

Everyone Got Involved

Everyone was busy giving something, contributing to building the House of Hashem. You had some copper in your tent? You brought it. Some linen? You brought that too. Another family came with gold, and another with bracelets and rings. הֵבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְדָבָה לַהֵשֶׁם – *Everyone had something to bring* (ibid. 29).

But not only contributing. In every tent, people were working: sewing, banging with their hammers, whatever they could to help build the House of Hashem. The weavers and the carpenters and the leather workers and the goldsmiths –

everybody! כָּל עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל was laboring to provide the necessary materials and accessories.

The entire camp was in an uproar! “Chaim, what are you bringing for the House of Hashem?”, “Sarah, what are you sewing for the Mishkan?” The children were interested too. When a little child sees that something is important – exciting – for the parent, so it becomes exciting for him too.

And so, all together they were busy serving Hashem! Everybody was busy pitching in with their hands and with their money and their time. It became a national expression of service of Hashem. We cannot overestimate the effect that it had on the people; *in every tent*, the focus was *avodas Hashem*.

At Our Core

And then finally, when the Mishkan was erected, it stood in the middle of the camp surrounded on all sides by the populace of the Jewish people. In the center of the camp was the House of Hashem, that was the core, the heart of our nation!

They learned a tremendous lesson, that generation. Everyone understood what the place of Hashem's service was to our nation. They felt it in their bones, it coursed through their veins, that our nation is a nation that serves Hashem! It's not that we're a nation, and that also we have places to serve Hashem. No! It's the service of Hashem – that's our nation! Nothing else! Around Hashem, that's how we set up camp!

And that's why, when Yehoshua brought the nation into Eretz Canaan and he deposited the Mishkan in Shiloh, so the Mishkan Shiloh became the center of our nation. And even though the Am Yisroel was now spread out in the land – they weren't living in close proximity to the Mishkan as in the *midbar* – but the lessons of those forty years were engraved on their minds, and the Mishkan Shiloh was the focal point of the nation. It was to Shiloh that the Am Yisroel traveled to remind

themselves that Hashem was still living among them.

Power to the Plishtim

Only that it didn't remain like that forever. You know there are sometimes periods in our history when idealism begins to take a back seat. Sometimes it might be because of persecution, other times it's because of prosperity – whatever it is, there's a *yeridah* and after a while, things aren't the same.

And that's what happened in the days of the Shoftim. In those early days of our history, when the Am Yisroel was still establishing its new power in Eretz Canaan, they were often under the yoke of the Plishtim. The Plishtim lived on the shore of the Mediterranean and they were the lords of the land. It was a loose kind of hegemony – they weren't the kind that was evident everywhere in the country, but they were there; they were always in the background causing trouble.

And because of that, many people were afraid to travel on the main roads. Even to be *oleh regel* on Yom Tov or to bring *korbanos* to Shiloh during the year, many people stopped doing because of the danger of being accosted. The Plishti officers would sometimes seize people without any reason; a flimsy excuse would be made up and people would be imprisoned, or their possessions would be taken away from them. And so, it's understandable that people were afraid to travel.

No Longer Central

And Devorah Haneviah sang about this: **קָדְלוּ אֶרְחוֹת** – *They stopped going on the main roads* (Shoftim 5:6). They were afraid to travel because of the gentiles who would wait in ambush on the sides of the roads. “It's too dangerous to go up to Shiloh,” they said.

Now, don't think they stopped going right away. The Am Yisroel of antiquity were a very enthusiastic people; they loved Hakadosh Baruch Hu – they were far above our present level. Even

the best Jews today, let's say the Jews of Boro Park or even Meah Shearim, they couldn't compare to the Jews who lived in those days. So they didn't give up altogether. They found backroads to use in order to avoid the Plishtim. **וְהִלְכֵי נְתִיבוֹת יִלְכוּ אֶרְחוֹת** – *When they had to travel, they went by byroads.*

But we understand that when the roads are dangerous, there will always be a slacking off; when people are discouraged from doing a mitzvah, after a while they stop. And so after a while, the mitzvah of *aliyah l'regel*, going up on Yom Tov to the Mishkan in Shiloh, fell into disuse. And even when Devorah and Borok ben Avinoam had a great victory over the Plishtim and it became possible again to go up, nevertheless people were afraid to go. Or, even if they weren't so afraid, but once they had stopped, they didn't go anymore.

An Important Personality

But it was only temporary because the good ideals in our nation are always alive. It might look like the fire was extinguished but inside the coal, there's still a fire burning – only that sometimes you need somebody to reignite it, to stoke the fire.

Now, that brings us to an important personality in the history of the Am Yisroel. In the beginning of Shmuel Alef, we read about a certain person: **וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן הָרְמָתִים צוֹפִים מֵהַר אֶפְרַיִם** – *There was a man from Har Efraim, וַשְּׁמוֹ אֶלְקָנָה* – *and his name was Elkanah. בֶּן יִרְחָם בֶּן אֶלְיָהוּא בֶּן תַּחוּ בֶּן צוּף אֶפְרַתִּי. It gives his lineage there and it tells us he was “Efrasi.” Efrasi means he was an important personality.*

Now, how he became important, we'll soon see. But right now we'll study the *poshut pshat*; we'll see what the *possuk* tells us about this man. **וַעֲלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מֵעִירוֹ לְהִשְׁתַּחוֹת, מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה** – *every year, to bow down at Shiloh, וְלָזָבַח לַיהוָה* – *and to bring offerings to Hashem.*

Back To The Center

וְעֹלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה means that Elkanah instituted a system of going up to Shiloh for the *shalosh regalim* – every time by means of a different route (Yalkut Shimoni 77). And because he wanted to make a demonstration out of it, so he didn't sneak through on the byroads. He went on the main roads and he purposefully would pass by different towns whenever he went, trying to convince more people to join him. First he would gather as many people as he could from his hometown, and then, as they passed by other villages, he enlisted more and more people to join. He said, "Come along with us. לְכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל הַר הַשֵּׁם – Let us all go up to the House of Hashem."

Now, it took many years but little by little, bigger and bigger throngs used to come to Shiloh. One man, all by himself, encouraged people until he restored the mitzvah of *aliyah l'regel* to its ancient prestige. On all sides now, when *yom tov* came, people were thronging all the roads and byroads – the Am Yisroel is coming together, marching to the Mishkan, singing songs and bringing offerings, cattle and sheep, to offer up in Shiloh.

And it wasn't just the mitzvah of *aliyah laregel* that was restored – it was the great lesson that it's the House of Hashem, *avodas Hashem*, that is the center of our lives. The old glory of the Am Yisroel, the glory of the nation that knows that *avodas Hashem* is the heart and soul of the people, was restored. And it's all to the credit of one man – of Elkanah.

Part II. Greatness in the Home

Elevated In His Home

Now, our Sages tell us something about Elkanah's achievement, something we wouldn't have noticed on our own. How did Elkanah become so great? Such greatness of ideals doesn't come from nowhere. Elkanah didn't merely arrive on the

scene one day with noble idealism. Something must have come before that.

So we go back now and study again the *possuk* that we cited earlier: וְעֹלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִעִירוֹ – This man used to go up from his city and gather together the people to make the trek up to Mishkan Shiloh. And on those words the Medrash Shmuel states as follows: וְעֹלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא – "And that man went up" means וְנִתְעַלָּה בְּבֵיתוֹ, that he rose up to greatness in his home.

Elkanah didn't wait for somebody to promote him to a position of prominence, a *shteller*. He began in his house when nobody knew about him. He didn't have any great throngs of people coming to listen to him. Nobody was knocking on his door asking him to lead the way to Shiloh. But he didn't wait for opportunity to knock because *he knew that his home was that opportunity*. And because he was a *ben aliyah*, the kind of man who didn't stand still, so he jumped at that opportunity. He inspired himself.

Bring Hashem Into Your Home!

I have no doubt that Elkanah was inspired when he read our *parshiyos* about the Mishkan. He took that lesson to heart that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants that as much as possible a home should be built around Him, that the activities in the home should be *avodas Hashem*. And Elkanah took that as a model. In the privacy of his own home he made it his function, as much as possible, that Hakodosh Baruch Hu should be the pivot around which everything else revolves.

That's how it all started – כָּל עֲלוּיוֹ לֹא הָיָה אֶלָּא מִעֲצָמוֹ – all of Elkanah's excellence, all of his increase in stature was due only to his own efforts; not by steps he took on the road to Shiloh but by small steps he took on his own private road in life.

At first, all he had was himself, but that was enough. And soon his own *avodas Hashem* began to overflow and the family became inspired; they saw an enthusiastic husband, an idealistic father.

He had a tremendous influence on the *bnei habayis*. His house became full of the Spirit of Hashem, a place where *avodas Hashem* is what matters most.

Now once a man begins in that direction, Hakadosh Baruch Hu spurs him on. **בְּדֶרֶךְ שְׂאֵרָם רוּצָה** - *If you choose a path in life and you're serious about it, Hakadosh Baruch Hu helps.* And so, it began to spread to the neighbors. It was a contagion. The Medrash says that **נִתְעַלָּה בְּחֻצְרוֹ** - *he became elevated in his chatzer*; it means that the next-door neighbors saw what Elkanah was doing and they began to recognize his worth. Not like today when anybody who wants to be *frum*, so his acquaintances look at him askance. No; we're talking about *mevakshim*, people who want to be better, and they were inspired. And so it started traveling down the block.

The Fire Spreads

And then **נִתְעַלָּה בְּעִירוֹ** - *he became famous in his town*. The neighbors one *chatzer* over heard what was going on and they began to do the same thing and after a while it spread throughout the entire town. Everybody became inspired by Elkanah's example. They were all fired with enthusiasm for the service of Hashem.

We had that here once. There was a man from out of town who wanted to learn - he never learned before! And so he joined up our telephone Torah program and he began learning. He learned Chumash. He learned a little Mishnayos, then a little bit Gemara and he liked that way of life. What happened eventually?

His wife was influenced; his children too. He came here and began inspiring others too. He began teaching others too. He was enthusiastic and he made others enthusiastic too. Today he's sitting in a *kollel* in Eretz Yisroel and now he's learning and teaching all day long. A remarkable story! He's influencing his entire neighborhood today. A man from a small town in Pennsylvania.

And that's what Elkanah did in his town. He put a fire into their hearts. When they saw his devotion to the service to Hashem, it spread in his *chatzer* and then in his *mavoi*, and then the entire neighborhood became enthusiastic.

The Road To Fame

Everybody in town was talking about Elkanah and they all tried to follow in the direction that he was traveling. Of course, he must have been a winsome personality, a kindly, friendly person who was interested in his neighbors. I'm sure he spoke to them and inspired them. It was not merely by his secret activities that they were inspired. I imagine that eventually he went out and urged them; and when they saw how sincere he was they began to listen to him and they began to travel in the direction of Hashem along with him.

And after a while **נִתְעַלָּה בְּכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל** - *he became famous everywhere*. He began the practice of going up to Shiloh through different routes every year. One year he traveled by this road, and when ten people saw Elkanah and his followers singing and going up to Shiloh, they joined in. And then next year, a different route. After a while everybody began practicing again the mitzvah of *aliyah l'regel* to go to Shiloh three times a year. Eventually the whole Am Yisroel was under his influence. Three times a year the Jewish nation was singing on the roads and marching up to Shiloh - the place of Hashem was jammed every year. And it was all the work of one man, Elkanah.

Your Home Career

Now we have to understand that this story is not told for itself. The stories that we're told in the Tanach are supposed to be a model for every Jew. Because every Jew has that opportunity to be an Elkanah - everyone comes into this world to utilize the opportunities available here and one of the most important opportunities is the home, the career of being *nisaleh bi'veiso*. It's in our homes

that all of us have the opportunity to elevate ourselves the same way Elkanah did.

Nobody should ever say, “What do you want from me, Ribono Shel Olam? I’m limited. I wish I had the opportunity; *then* you’d see what I would do for you. If I were a king, if I was a president, if I was a ruler, I would make the entire nation good! I would make us a nation where Hashem is most important.”

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, “Fine. Could be. But you’re a king in your house, aren’t you? I don’t mean that you’re a tyrant; I mean you’re a king – you have opportunities there. Are you utilizing your house? Is your house being made into a place where Hashem is what’s most important?”

What will happen after that? Could be it’ll spread too. Imagine you live in Boro Park or in Yerushalayim in a big apartment house. You know what that means to live crowded with so many other *frum* Jews? There’s so much opportunity for your idealism to spread. Of course, everybody there is *frum*, everybody keeps Shabbos and everything else; but you understand that being *frum* is only the beginning of a career of *avodas Hashem*. It’s not enough – there’s much more to accomplish!

And so your enthusiasm for Hakadosh Baruch Hu might spread to your upstairs neighbors and your downstairs neighbors; and before you know it the entire building can grow stronger in service of Hashem.

Start Small

If you’re a yeshivah boy or a Beis Yaakov girl it might spread among your friends. Maybe it will spread more than that, I cannot tell you; but whatever will be, it always begins with *nisaleh b’veiso*, by elevating yourself in your home by means of making your little domicile a semblance of the *machaneh Yisroel* where everything revolved around *avodas Hashem*.

How to do that? Many ways. There are endless ways. But you have to begin somewhere. Let’s say with *brachos*, with thanking Hashem. It’s a good place to start because it’s so commonplace. From now on, the *brachos* you make when you want to put a piece of food in your mouth should be said out loud and enthusiastically.

It might be a little embarrassing in the beginning – your wife might think you went off your rockers or your mother might not want you to come back here any longer – but you do it anyhow. And it has an effect; little by little your wife is influenced by that.

Imagine such a home. A couple, they’re newly married, and they’re sitting down to eat supper and they’re thinking – they could say it too – “We’re going to thank Hashem now for our food.” Imagine such a thing! A husband and wife are eating in their little kitchen and they’re thinking about Hashem.

And when the children come along – by the way it’s never too late to start; even if your children are big boys and girls already – you teach your children to say *brachos* the same way!

Life Is Fun!

You must teach your family to think about Hakadosh Baruch Hu and to be grateful to Him for everything that they have. When you’re speaking to your wife or to your husband and to your children, you’re talking always about the kindness of Hashem.

“Children isn’t it good that Hashem gave us eyes! Isn’t it fun to see, to have two cameras that work so perfectly. *Kinderlach*, let’s all say together, “Thank You Hashem for our eyes!”

“Children look outside, at the sunshine! Hashem is warming us up! And he’s also cooking the fruit on the trees for us! The peaches and plums we’ll eat in the summertime is because of the sunny day today!”

And all day long in the house, the words “*Boruch Hashem*,” “*Boruch Hashem*.” But not like people say “*Boruch Hashem*” by rote. Remind your children, “In this house we mean it!”

We Love Hashem!

Say, “Children, altogether let’s say, ‘We love You Hashem.’ We love You for giving us a home to live in. And running water too!” And all the children in a chorus, boys and girls should all chime in and say, “We love you, Hashem.”

Your child might laugh at that. Don’t be surprised at that. Could be he might be polite enough not to laugh, but in his heart he’s laughing. He’s thinking that he has an eccentric father; he hopes you won’t say these things when his friends come by to play.

However, don’t give up hope. You keep on talking to your child. He might laugh at you, but the words go into his heart. I still remember what was said to me when I was two years old (The Rav was 90 years old when he said this). I still remember! You’ll be surprised. Children don’t forget. And so those seeds of *emunah* are going to remain there. And someday they might bear beautiful fruit. Someday they’ll remember, “We once said, ‘We love Hashem.’” You’re a different person now – once you say that, you’re transformed entirely. In his home too, he’ll know that Hashem is what counts most.

Part III. Greatness in Our Homes

An Important Subject

Now when it comes to making your home a home of *avodas Hashem* we come to one subject which is perhaps even more important for the Jewish home than many others we might speak about and that’s Torah study. Because the more *limud Torah* there is in the home – whether it’s *halachah* or Gemara or Chumash or something else – the more of a perfect home it becomes.

The Chafetz Chaim considered this subject so important that he wrote a *sefer* just on this subject called *Toras Habayis*. It means “The Torah you Study in the Home.” And so it’s a very important subject that has to be studied, but first, an introduction.

You know, in the Torah there’s a requirement that on the doorways of a Jewish house there must be a *mezuzah* – a Jewish homeowner is obligated *min hatorah* to inscribe on a piece of parchment two *parshiyos* of the Torah and place it on his doorpost. And it’s a law that is fulfilled by our nation implicitly. You won’t find today a kosher Jewish home that doesn’t have a *mezuzah*. It’s axiomatic. Today even very many Jews who are not so observant want to have a *mezuzah* but in a real Jewish home there’s no question that the requirement to put up *mezuzos* is fulfilled.

The Meaningful Mezuzah

Now, it’s true that if you put up a *mezuzah* and then you forget all about it, you’ve fulfilled the requirement of the Torah – you’ve discharged your obligation and the *beis din* cannot step in and chastise you or even criticize you. But we’re not talking now about the minimum; we’re speaking about becoming great, and so we have to know that there’s a purpose in the *mezuzah* in your home.

What’s written in the *mezuzah*? There are two *parshiyos*, two paragraphs, found in every *mezuzah* and in each one it says, וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשַׁבְּתוֹךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ – You should speak in the words of Torah when you sit in your house. It means, *you should study Torah in your home*. That’s what it means. You should study Torah in your house!

And it’s written twice – in the first *parshah* and the second *parshah* – in case you missed it the first time. “*You must speak in the words of the Torah in your home*.” Even if you study Torah in the *yeshivah*, in a *kollel* or a *beis hamedrash* or synagogue, your home should be a place of Torah. The *mezuzah* is telling you that.

Saved From The News

So here's a man; he's walking from the dining room to the living room and he's going to sit down now on the couch and he'll pick up the newspaper and he'll kick his feet up for a half hour and fill his head with nothing.

You know what the purpose of that mezuzah on the living room doorway is? To foil his plans! To save him! To remind him, **וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשַׁבְּתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ**! Your home is a place of *avodas Hashem*, of learning Torah.

Pick up a *sefer*! You don't know how? So pick up a Mishlei in English and study it; memorize the words. You never read Sefer Ezra in your life?! You mean to say you're going to go your whole life without reading Ezra? How could you do such a thing? A newspaper you'll read, but Ezra you won't read?! Even if you read a *frum* newspaper, so you'll skip Ezra and Nechemia for a *frum* newspaper? At least once you should read Ezra and Nechemia. Read it in English! Why not? "I'll get around to it someday," he says. When he'll be 199 years old in the old age home – he thinks he'll still be there; so that's when he'll get around to it.

You Can Become Great

You can become a *talmid chochom* too. Don't say, "It's too late for me." Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "What's the matter with you? Just because you've been an *am haaretz* for fifty years doesn't mean you have to remain one. You can start listening to the mezuzah even if you're sixty years old!

Why don't you start learning Chumash? Take a translation. There's a linear translation, line by line, and learn two *sedrahs* of Chumash on your own." All you need is twenty minutes a day. After a while, you know two *sedrahs* of Chumash. Of course you're not a *gaon olam*, but still, it's a good beginning.

Once you know two *sedrahs* of Chumash, ask somebody to examine you at random, skipping

around. If you know all the words in two *sedrahs* of Chumash, now you can start Pirkei Avos. Start studying Pirkei Avos, six *perakim*. It's also available with a linear translation. You translate six *perakim* of Pirkei Avos. Now you can read it perfectly and translate every word, have somebody examine you and then take a Mishnayos without *nekudos* and read the six *perakim* without *nekudos*.

Once you can read the six *perakim* of Mishnayos without *nekudos*, you're already in the right direction! You're headed towards success! Then you take a linear Eilu Metzios with a little bit of explanation on the side. Eilu Metzios! Ooh ahh! You're not a *gadol baTorah* yet but you're learning Shas now. Once you know Eilu Metzios, then you're ready to learn everything. You're a new person already!

Your Home, Your Fortress

But not only that you change yourself. That's important enough, but you change your home too. At night, when boys come back from the yeshivah, don't accept the excuse that they learned all day long. Make them sit down at the table for a few minutes. Accustom them, train them to open up the Gemara at home, whatever it is. Even the little children who learn Chumash, let them say it aloud. And surely the father of the home should show an example.

What happens? When you make Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Torah the focus in the home, your wife changes and your children change too. The entire home is transformed. It becomes a fortress.

The Gemara (Eiruvin 18b) says that **כָּל בֵּית הַלַּיְלָה שֶׁנִּשְׁמָעֵין בוֹ דְּבַרֵי תוֹרָה בְּלַיְלָה**, every house where the words of the Torah are heard at night – all day he's trying to earn a living, but at night the words of the Torah are heard, **שׁוֹב אֵינוֹ נִהָרָב** – such a house will never be destroyed.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to try to preserve a house like that; He has a personal interest in that house, so to speak. He is interested that this house

should continue. And therefore it's going to be protected against many vicissitudes which otherwise would come in and break up a house.

Home Insurance

Don't we see many times, *chas v'shalom* it shouldn't happen, but don't we see that sometimes suddenly a house is broken up? Sometimes an illness suddenly strikes, *chas v'shalom*, or another tragedy, and the parents are gone; both parents are gone. It happens. Sometimes, there's a breakup. A tragedy. One parent, the father runs away. It happens, *chas v'shalom*. There are all kinds of ways that a house can be attacked.

And one of the ways of ensuring the survival of that house is to take out a Gemara at night; if you don't know Gemara, take out a Chumash and say Torah aloud at night – even a little bit – at your table. You don't realize; the entire atmosphere changes in that house. It becomes a fortress now, protected from destruction.

Now, of course, we understand that such a promise is like all the statements in the Scriptures and in the Gemara; preventing the destruction of a house depends on various factors. But we're being told now that when someone is *nisaleh biveiso* by studying Torah in his home, that's one of the most important factors of all because Hakadosh Baruch Hu already has a very big interest in preserving that house.

The Living Shas

Now, don't think that women are excluded from this subject. Because more than anyone else she's the one making the Toras Habayis! If you're a mother raising children in such a home then you have to know that you're working in the greatest endeavor available to mankind. You're inundating the world with Torah. You're raising up a living Shas!

Suppose Mesichta Brachos was alive. Suppose you could take Mesichta Brachos and put blood into it, and bones and skin and hair on top of it,

and it would talk. And Mesichta Brachos is walking around and you could feed him too. He's a little toddler, a mischievous fellow who breaks things whenever you turn around, but what wouldn't you do for Mesichta Brachos? So in the beginning you have to clean him, and clean his diapers. Mesichta Brachos when he's little, he's a nuisance. And when he's bigger, he's a bigger nuisance. Big boys are also nuisances. There's always going to be trouble in the house when there are people around. But what wouldn't you do for Mesichta Brachos?

But suppose it's not only Brachos – suppose the whole Shas is toddling around in your house. So even though he turns on the water in the bathroom and it floods the basement, for a Shas you do anything. And your daughters, even better. Your daughters are going to be a whole lot of *Shasim*. You're creating *tzadikim* and *tzidkoniya*s in your home. When you understand that, you're on the way to building a home like Elkanah did.

That's the important lesson we're learning here tonight, the same lesson that Elkanah learned from the building of the Mishkan – that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants that we should make Him the heart of the Jewish home.

Your Little Sanctuary

And just like Elkanah made his home great – he made it a place where *avodas Hashem* was the most important ideal – we can do the same thing in our own homes. Everyone, without exception, can be *nisaleh biveiso*. In your little home – maybe it's five people; if you're *zoicheh* it's crowded with ten people there, maybe more – that's where you'll serve Hashem, and that's where you'll grow great by building a home that is like the tents we set up in the wilderness, tents that at all times were surrounding the Mishkan.

And so, it means that everyone has to think about the opportunities in the house. Are you utilizing your house? Is your house being made into a *makom kadosh* – a place where you serve Hashem? In all the little things, the daily activities

that transform your life, are you *nisaleh b'veiso*? It means that you don't search for great opportunities, the *gedolos v'niflaos* outside. It's in the house, with all the regular episodes of living normally in a house, that's where you're *nisaleh*.

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 a mother, a father, the children, they all have to know that *the true measure* of their 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 nation. *Nisaleh b'veiso!* The home is what counts!

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Becoming Great In Your Home

The Torah discusses the building of the Mishkan at length to teach us that the service of Hashem is the center of the Jewish nation. We learned that Elkanah taught this lesson to his generation, but first he was *nisaleh b'veiso*, he acted it out in the privacy of his own home. If we wish to become great, the first step we must take is to make Hashem Great in our homes. This week I will *bli neder* make a *bracha* out loud in my home, at least once each day. It's a small step, but the first small steps on the path to greatness.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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Should one allow himself to absorb the *apikorsus* found in books about *niflaos habriyah*?



I'm not sure I understand this question but I suppose he means this: If you're going to read books about the wonders of nature, won't we also find there statements that can mislead people to atheism and *apikorsus*?

And the answer is certainly you will. And I never said you should read those books. But what I do say is that we have a tremendous textbook whose pages are open before our eyes – nature is apparent and obvious for anybody who is interested in seeing it. *יודוך השם כל מעשיך*. Everything in this world is praising Hashem. There are so many things that are available every day in our lives that you don't need any books.

However, if you're going to be a teacher, you can read books if you're capable of understanding the poison and omitting it, skipping over it. But for ordinary people, these gentile books are not recommended.

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