

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

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PARSHAS TAZRIA

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE LONELY LEPER

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Part I. Living to Choose

What Is Life?

In Mesichta Nedarim (64b) we read the following *braisa*: אַרְבַּעַה הַשׁוֹבֵיִם כְּמֵת - Four people are considered like dead: עֵנִי - A poor man, וּמְצָרֶע - a leper, וְסוּמָא - a blind man, וּמִי שֶׁאֵין לוֹ בְּנִים - and one who has no children. Four people who are alive but there's something there, a common denominator, that makes them הַשׁוֹבֵיִם כְּמֵת, as if they were dead.

Now, if we're going to make sense of this *maamar* we must first of all try to understand what's so bad about being a *meis*? What is it that a dead man does not possess that people who are living do possess?

So the superficial thinker will right away say that life means the ability to eat and to breathe and everything else that a dead person can't do. But that can't be it. These four still have that; that's not what life is about – those are just functions of living. Breathing is merely a requirement for living, to oxygenate the blood. Eating? Appetite is only an inducement to get you to refuel. In order to lure you to the filling station, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives you an appetite.

So what we consider 'living' are actually just examples of the functions that sustain life. But the question is what is it that makes life so special, so valuable? Because actually it's not so bad to be dead; the *neshamah* continues to live anyhow. Who cares about eating and drinking and breathing if you go to Gan Eden and you enjoy all the delights of Olam Haba. What's so good about being alive?! What is it that the *meis* is missing?

My Life, My Choice

The answer is one thing. There's one tremendous gift, a unique jewel that the *meis* loses when he leaves this world and that's the gift of free will. *Bechirah*; the ability to choose! That's the *segulas hachaim*; that's the diamond which life offers us. The opportunity to choose between good and bad, between good and better, and between better and even better.

Once a man dies, that great gift dies along with him. All you can do now is get reward. The man in the grave can't accomplish anything anymore. No more opportunities.

Shlomo Hamelech says that. In *Koheles* (9:4) we read the following verse: בִּי מִי אֲשֶׁר יִחַבֵּר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים - Anyone who is connected to all the living, יֵשׁ בְּטָחוֹן, יֵשׁ בְּטָחוֹן.

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– there is hope. Bitachon means confidence, hope; something to look forward to. If you're יְחִיבֵר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים, if you're still alive so יֵשׁ בְּטוֹחוֹן, there is still hope.

But if we look at this *possuk* – it's always worthwhile looking at the verse inside – we'll see that there's more to the *possuk* than that. Because there's a *kri* and a *kesiv* there; it means that there's a way that we say the *possuk*, but there's another way that it's written. Instead of יְחִיבֵר, *yud ches beis reish*, it's written יִבְחֵר, *yud beis ches reish*.

Ooh, it looks like an error, like somebody in a hurry transposed the letters. But that wouldn't be a *kesiv*. If it was an error, it would never be perpetuated. And here it's preserved – Koheles intended that we should study both the *kri* and the *kesiv*. Like this: What's the *bitachon*, the hope, of one who is יְחִיבֵר אֶל הַחַיִּים, *connected to the living*? It's because he is יִבְחֵר אֶל הַחַיִּים, he can still *choose with all the living*. If you have *the ability to choose with your free will*, that's the value of life. Otherwise, as great as you were in this world, once you leave this world you lose that great opportunity, the privilege, the gem that made life valuable.

The Lion and the Dog

Now, in order to emphasize this principle – after all, it's a most important principle; it's the purpose of life – Shlomo Hamelech adds there a few more words to end the *possuk*.

בֵּי לִבְלֵב חַי הוּא טוֹב מִן הָאֲרִיָּה הַמֵּת – *for a living dog is better than a dead lion*. Now these words seem to us entirely unnecessary. Everyone understands a dead lion is dead. It's carrion, dead refuse, whereas a living dog is alive. Of course, the live dog is better. A wild dog in the jungle will eat a dead lion. It's superfluous.

But listen to the incident that Shlomo Hamelech was actually describing here. In Mesichta Shabbos the Gemara tells us what took place on the day that Dovid Hamelech passed away. He passed away on Shabbos and he fell dead in his garden. The

details of that story are interesting and you can read it in Mesichta Shabbos, *daf lamed amud beis*, but we begin in the middle of that story.

Life and Death Shailos

Dovid Hamelech is lying dead in his garden and it's Shabbos. It's summertime too and a dead body in the summer sun is going to be affected by the heat. And so the Gemara says that on that day Shlomo Hamelech sent two inquiries to the *Chachmei Sanhedrin*; two questions he inquired of the Torah Sages.

First, אָבֵא מֵת וּמוּטָל בְּחֶמֶד – *my father is dead and he is lying in the sun*. “So what's the *din*? Am I permitted to move him into the shade?”

The second question he sent was, “The dogs of my father's house are hungry. I'm responsible now for them and I want to know if it's permitted for me to cut up a dead carcass of an animal in order to feed them?”

So the *Sanhedrin* replied: “You can cut up the animal carcass to feed your dogs and your father you cannot move.” That was the *psak*: ‘Your father's body you cannot move on Shabbos. It's *muktzeh*. But for the sake of the dogs, you can cut up an animal carcass.’

Staging a Scene

Now this whole story was just a *mashal*. Shlomo didn't actually have to ask any questions of *Sanhedrin*; he knew the answers very well. He just wanted a parable; he wanted to make a public demonstration.

The people were there; they were walking by, looking to see what's doing with their beloved king. “Look,” Shlomo said to them. “My father! The great lion, the hero of the Jewish nation who overcame all of our enemies on all sides and conquered all of Eretz Yisroel! The lion who authored *Tehillim*! The lion who prepared the entire plan for the Beis Hamikdash! And many other things he accomplished for the Jewish people and now he's lying dead. The *tzaddik* Dovid Hamelech, the great lion, is lying

dead in the hot sun. But you can't move him on Shabbos. He doesn't get that consideration."

But what is this we see that these servants are hastening now with knives and with bowls? That's what the people were saying. Where are they going? To service the dogs; they're going to cut up meat for living dogs.

Thunderbolt of Daas

It was a tremendous demonstration, a thunderbolt – it hit the people between the eyes. Even Shlomo felt it in his bones! "My father, as great as a lion he was, we cannot move him. And the reason is that once a man dies he has lost everything that made him great: *his free will.*"

Of course, Dovid himself is in the Next World enjoying happiness beyond our ability to describe. The ecstasy of Olam Haba is too great for a human being even to see and certainly to experience. But in the midst of all that happiness he has lost something precious that he could never regain and that's the gift of free will. 'The lion is dead' means the lion can't choose anymore. And therefore he doesn't get the consideration that even the living dog does.

The Human Dog

Now we understand that if the dead 'lion' was Dovid Hamelech then the 'dog' meant also a human – but one who is of low quality. If somebody qualifies for the name *kelev*, we understand that he's a person quite low on the scale of humanity.

And yet Shlomo was stating the lowest man when he's alive is better off than the most important human who has already died. **וְהַכֶּלֶב** – *the lowest human being*, **וְהַחַי** – *if he's still alive*, he has more hope because he can become something; he can become greater than my father, Dovid. The lowest human being, who is like a *kelev* – he's the most sordid character; he lives only with his senses, only for materialism – but as long as he is alive, he is able to change himself so completely that he can

develop into a lion! He can become exceptionally great.

One Minute to Choose

The Rambam says that. In his Hilchos Teshuva (5:2) he writes, **כָּל אֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל יָכוֹל לְהִיּוֹת צַדִּיק כְּמֹשֶׁה** – *Anybody could be a tzaddik like Moshe Rabbeinu*. You hear that startling statement? Anybody! Now most probably you won't – it's more probable that you won't even come close to what Moshe Rabbeinu was; most probably you won't come near to what Dovid accomplished. But no matter; as long as you're still alive you can do something at least! You're alive! You can transform whatever '*kelev*' you have inside you, into a '*lion*'. And whatever little bit you do, is worth everything in the Next World.

That's what it says **יְפֵה שְׂעָה אֶחָת** – *Every minute in this world is more precious than the happiness of the Next World* (Avos 4:17). Because it's a minute of opportunity. That's why the Vilna Gaon cried when he was dying. He was lying sick on his deathbed on Chol Hamoed Sukkos and when they brought the *esrog* and the *lulav* to him he burst out weeping: "It's the last time; the last time I'll be able to *bentch lulav* and *esrog*." He burst out weeping because he knew what life is for; the whole wealth of his life now was coming to an end!

I remember when Reb Aharon Kotler, *zichrono livrachah*, was on his deathbed, he was crying. He said, "*Ribono Shel Olam*, let me live! I can do so much in this world!" He wept because those who understand the opportunity of life, they know that death is a great tragedy. **וְאֶחְרִיתָהּ כְּיוֹם מָר** – *The bitter day of death, a very bitter day* (Amos 8:10). It's not bitter because you won't eat supper anymore, or because you won't make money anymore. It's bitter because there's no more *bechirah*.

The Yearning of the Soul

And therefore even though the *neshamah* continues in the Next World – it's very much alive! – but the *neshamah* yearns to come back again.

Even a man of the greatest accomplishments, even Moshe Rabbeinu, if he could come back to this world for one moment of choosing, just to drop a penny into the charity box, just for that alone it would surrender a great part of its happiness in the afterlife.

All of the *meisim* in the Next World, right now would like to come back for one moment to be able to choose again. The *meis* envies you. That's why when you walk in the cemetery, you have to cover up your *tzitzis* (Brachos 18a). There's a *din* that when you walk near the grave, you have to put your *tzitzis* inside your pants. They shouldn't be visible because the dead body is jealous. "Look, you're flouting your opportunities," he's thinking. "You're doing *mitzvos* but I can't do anything. I'm dead."

Of course the *meis* doesn't think, but we have to consider it as if he's thinking. You have to have a certain commiseration with the dead man otherwise it's לועג לַרֶשׁ – it's *mocking the dead* (Mishlei 17:5); they can't do any more *mitzvos*. That's what life is: the opportunity to choose!

בִּי מִי אֶשֶׁר יִחְבֵּר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים – As long as you're still with the living it's *yivchar*; you still have the gem that has no equal in the universe, free will. There's nothing like that gift. You're a chooser! To make something out of yourself! To become better!

Part II. Living With Choice

Stingy on the Matzos

Now, with that introduction we can begin to understand what the Gemara in Nedarim is saying, that these four individuals are *chashuvim k'meis*, considered dead. It means that these four people have lost some of their *bechirah*, some of their free will to accomplish in their lives.

Number one, the poor man. The poor man is, of course, not actually dead. But because of his poverty he's not able to utilize his free will in ways that he could if he was wealthy, and that, to a certain extent, is a loss of life.

Here's a man; it's almost Pesach and he's thinking that he wants to serve Hashem by buying *matzah* with all the *hiddurim*, all the *chumros*. Very good! He wants kosher *matzah*. Excellent idea! But he can't; he doesn't have enough money and so he can't activate his free will. He's in shackles. It means he wants to choose righteousness but he can't. As far as *matzah* is concerned he's a *meis*.

Or maybe he would like to sit and learn Torah on Sundays. That's a choice that he'll never regret. But he can't; he has to take an extra job to pay the rent. Sometimes he has to work overtime and he has no spare time for himself to learn Torah at night. He can't say no to his boss and so his *bechirah* is limited because of his poverty.

A Wealth of Possibilities

A rich man however is alive! He can do a great many things if he is interested in doing them. He can retire and sit in the *kollel* all day long. And then he can take off lunch hour to write checks for good causes. He can build a world of Torah! He can spread the knowledge of Hakadosh Baruch Hu!

With money you can buy better *matzah*. With money you can buy *seforim*. With money you can get good sons-in-law for your daughters. With money you can even bribe *goyim* that they should do favors for Jews. The wealthy man is absolutely a bigger *baal bechirah* than the one shackled in poverty, and that means he's more alive than the poor man.

Great Paupers

Of course the poor man is not *actually* dead because there are a lot of things he can do. He can still *daven* a good *minchah* and *maariv*. He can still learn on Shabbos and do many many *mitzvos*. Absolutely the poor man can make choices.

And he can choose greatness too. We have great men who succeeded in becoming great *ovdei Hashem* in the midst of poverty. Do we need a better illustration than Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya? Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya was

poor all his life. He toiled in his little hut – probably it was one little room where he worked by day and slept at night and he toiled there over a charcoal fire making needles (Yerushalmi Berachos 4:1). That was his *parnassah*.

And yet this man who all his life endured poverty became a very great Sage and the *Av Beis Din*. To this day he shines from the pages of the Talmud; he's everywhere in the Mishnah and in the Gemara and we live by many of his statements. He is but one example of an untold number of people who were poor and yet achieved greatness beyond measure.

Pray for Wealth

And so poverty is never an excuse because whatever life you're given, that's your test. You'll be rewarded for achieving whatever you can with the lot that you were given. The Jewish nation has hundreds of thousands of examples, millions, of poor people who became great in the eyes of Hashem. And yet there's no question that in this one area of 'life' – the *bechirah* you can accomplish with money – the poor man is not able to activate his free will as much as he would like and so he's *chashuv k'meis*.

That, by the way, is why you have to pray always to Hashem not to be poor (Shabbos 151b): "Please Hashem, I should never sink into the abyss of poverty." Not because of the affliction of poverty; not because you'll be lacking the ability to enjoy life more, to buy a nicer car or more expensive drapes. It's because the poor person lacks the ability to utilize life to its fullest. He's frozen into inactivity.

The Blind

Now, number two in the *braisa's* list is the *metzora* but we'll come back to him soon; we'll talk first about the blind man: סוּמָא הָעֵוֶב כְּמֵת – A person who can't see is considered dead.

Now, that sounds insensitive at first. It's a tragedy, a *rachmanus*, no question about it; but he's considered *dead*? He's alive as anyone else.

The answer is the same thing that we're talking about: he's alive, absolutely. But life is for choosing, for choosing to make something of ourselves while we're still in this world; and *the blind man is lacking one of the most important implements that we use for choosing*.

Because 'seeing is believing', after all. Seeing is for *emunah*! The purpose of creation is so that you should see Hakadosh Baruch Hu; you should see the wonders of nature and become aware of the Creator.

Of course, if people don't want to see, they want to be blind all their lives, that's their loss; but anybody who wishes to see can believe in Hashem. And it's sight that makes that possible. That's the primary purpose of your eyes – for acquiring *daas Hashem*, awareness of Hashem. Everything else you do with your eyes is secondary to that.

Sight is Life

And therefore if a person has two functioning eyes he can live life to its fullest because he can choose to see the *maasei yedei Hashem*. The natural objects in the world that make us aware of Hakadosh Baruch Hu make life worth living.

And because a *suma* has lost that opportunity therefore he's *choshuv k'meis*. Of course, he has compensation. He can listen to what others tell him. He learns from those who are sighted, but אֵינוּ דוֹמָה שְׂמִיעָה לְרֵאיוֹתָ – *listening is no comparison to seeing*. It's not his fault of course; he didn't ask for such a disability. But in that one area – a very important area – he's *choshuv k'meis*.

Now, there's still plenty of room for achievement. Some of our greatest men were blind. Rav Sheishes was blind. Rav Yosef was blind. The truth is that many people who can't see have become much greater than others who can. Only that in order to emphasize to us that life is for choosing achievement and what it means to lose out on *any* detail of life, our Sages told us this axiom; that the

blind person, to some extent, has lost part of his life.

Children Destroy Enemies

The next one is **מִי שֶׁאֵין לוֹ בָּנִים** – *one who doesn't have any children*. He's also, in one way, not living. In Tehillim (127:5) it says, **כְּחֻצִים בְּיַד גִּבּוֹר בֵּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים** – *like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the youth*. If you have children, it's like being well-armed; you have lots of arrows to shoot. **אֲשֶׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר** **אֲשֶׁר מְלֵא אֶת אֲשֵׁפְתּוֹ מִהֶם** – *Happy is the man who filled his quiver with arrows*; it means he has a lot of children. **לֹא יִבְשׁוּ** – *Such a man will never be put to shame*; **בִּי יִדְבְּרוּ אֶת אוֹיְבֵים בַּשָּׂעַר** – *he will trample the enemies at the gate*.

Imagine now the picture. It's the olden days, and outside of a small Jewish village in Eretz Yisroel the Arabs are working in fields. They see an old man walking around and they think, 'An old man, all by himself. We can attack him.'

And so the Arabs start running towards the town. The old man though, he has a *shofar* – that was the ancient siren-call for help – and he gives a blast on the *shofar* and his family starts running out of the houses; sons and grandsons. Not a few sons; a lot of sons! And each son has an army of his own sons at his heels. The Arabs didn't expect that! The family pours out and they trample on the Arabs at the gate; they make short shrift of them. Ahh, that's a good ending to the story. Absolutely it's good to have a lot of children.

Children Destroy the Yetzer Hara

But children are more important than even that – killing marauders is the smallest of accomplishments; with children you kill the *yetzer hara*. **מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים יִסְדֶּרֶת עוֹז** – *From the mouth of little children you establish the strength of the Jewish people*, **לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם** – *to destroy the enemy and the one who wants to take revenge upon us* (Tehillim 8:3). Who is that? The *seforim* say it's talking about the *yetzer hara*! (Ramchal, Derech Eitz Chaim, 23). With a lot of little children studying

Torah, we combat all forces of evil! With *yeshivas*, with *Beis Yaakovs*, with *frum* children growing up all around us, that's our army! That's our army against the *satan*!

And therefore, when a father has many children who are studying Torah, sons and sons-in-law and many grandchildren and they're all *frum*, an army of Torah, so **אֲשֶׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר**, how happy is such a man. He and his wife, they're rich!

The childless person on the other hand, that part of life was taken away from him; the opportunity to raise children as *ovdei Hashem*. And so in a certain sense, he's *choshuv k'meis*.

The Childless Righteous

Of course he's not a *meis*; it's *k'meis*. He has compensations and he should make use of his time. Instead of spending his time on children now he can spend more time on *shleimus*. The Chovos Halevovos says that; he says that if you are one of those who have no children, you should be grateful that He absolved you from the obligation of children. Children are a big responsibility too. As the children come, the obligations come raining down upon you. You're going crazy from them. It's not easy, that obligation of *bechirah*.

And so suppose Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't give you that opportunity. It's silly for a person to waste his life in sadness. On the contrary, breathe a sigh of relief, like the Chovos Halevovos says, and be grateful; now you can go ahead and accomplish the other great things in life.

A man can become great. The Chazon Ish, *zichrono livrachah*, had no children; he was able to learn more and more. Reb Chaim Ozer *zichrono livrachah* had only one child, a daughter who died young; but he learned more and more. There were a lot of *gedolim* who had no children and that helped them to become greater. You'll use your life for other great achievements.

Great Women

How many women have time to read a Kuzari or to read the Chovos Halevovos? A mother of children, she can't even find time to read it in translation. So if you were given that opportunity, grab it! It's a different type of *bechirah*. She'll become great in *mussar*, in *daas Hashem*. No question she's suffering – she lost out on having children and also the *bechirah* of children – but she can become great in *daas*, in *mussar*, in *yiras Hashem* and *ahavas Hashem*, in the midst of her difficulties. There's so much to learn, so much to gain that a mother of children just can't do.

She's not of that bent of mind, of reading *seforim*? She can become great in *gemilus chassodim*. There are careers in helping other people; a lot of things to do that mothers of families cannot do. But still in the sense of what they could have accomplished, of what could have been, of the opportunities with children, they're *choshuv k'meis*.

And so these three, the poor and the blind and the childless, are all alive; they're capable of achievements and greatness and perfection. They're capable of all good things but in order that we should understand what life is for – *bechirah*, choosing – our Sages taught us that missing out on even a little bit of that life is *chashuvim k'meis*.

Part III. Living with Leprosy

The Death of Quarantine

And now we come to our final example of the living dead – the *metzora*. The leper in our *sedrah* is considered like a *meis*. You know why? Because the Torah says *יָשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבוֹ* – *He has to dwell by himself outside of the camp* (Vayikra 13:46) It's a law of the Torah that the leper must live outside the city and we'll soon see that loneliness, that separation from humanity, is like being dead.

Now some people would like to explain this procedure of living alone as the quarantining of a

man with a dangerous illness. After all, don't we see that even today lepers are kept in separate places? But the truth is that reason is not valid at all. It could be a side benefit, it could be one of the reasons why the Torah said it, but that certainly wasn't *the* purpose of the Torah law. Because we know that *shiluach metzora* is only for a *metzora* Yisroel; a gentile leper is not sent away. And if it was a matter of contagion, that wouldn't make any sense.

And so we see that there's a lesson here. We're being taught that a person who doesn't know how to live among people – he doesn't get along with others, he speaks *lashon hara*, other things – so we send him away. Let him separate from society for a while and think about what happened; let him recalibrate his way of living among others.

Wicked, Dangerous Phones

Nowadays the *metzora* would be able to use the telephone. It's a problem, the telephone. How can he be in the solitude he needs to heal his ways with a telephone? *Ach!*

Actually the telephone is a problem in general, not only for the *metzora*. What a wicked instrument it is! Over every telephone there ought to be a sign: 'Beware! High voltage! Extremely dangerous!' Some people put stickers on the phone, *נָצֹר לְשׂוֹנֵךְ מִרֶעֶ*. Very good. But I think it should be a more drastic sticker. The telephone is the most dangerous thing in the house. It's like an instrument that has 50,000 volts.

It's a good idea not to install a telephone when you get married. Of course for that you'll have to marry the right kind of a wife. Only one of the girls who come here to listen are eligible for that. The others who never heard this will need still a lot of training.

But in the ancient days, before Alexander Graham Bell, a *metzora* was very alone. And in that solitude, away from people, he was able to appreciate his mistakes and plan to rectify them.

Pleasures of Solitude

The question is what does it mean that he's *chashuv k'meis* because he's all by himself? He's alone, so what about it? Don't we see that he's benefiting from it, from having time alone to do *teshuvah*?

Some people would appreciate that very much. Who needs people? You know, when you walk in the streets early in the morning and the streets are empty, sometimes you think, "How beautiful these streets are when there's nobody around." A person once told me, "The worst thing about streets is that there are people on them."

It's Not Life

But that's a big error; it's all wrong. As great as solitude is – as great as the achievements a person can make by having time for himself – there's something that's missing from his life. He's not fully alive because one of the most important achievements of life is living among others. And so, when a person is forced to be away from people it's a little bit of death; a little bit of the purpose of life is taken away from you.

That's why in our *possuk*, when Shlomo Hamelech was telling us that the greatness of being alive is that you can still choose, he didn't say, 'He who is alive has hope.' No, he doesn't say it that way. He states *מִי אֲשֶׁר יִחְבֵּר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים יֵשׁ בְּטָחוֹן* – 'He who is *joined to the living*; for him there is hope.' Why mention 'joined to the living'? You're alive, that's all. It could have said *כִּי מִי אֲשֶׁר הוּא יֵשׁ בְּטָחוֹן* – *If you're alive, you have hope*. It's more economical; it saves so many words.

The answer is it would be a false economy, a false saving, and Shlomo Hamelech knew better. Shlomo said his words with exactness. Because just to be alive? No! That's not the point. You have to be *joined to the living*! That's called life! Free will for a man who is in a desert all by himself is not perfect free will. It's only when you're connected to the living, that's when the gift of free will is really activated.

Connected to Everyone

And not just 'the living'; Shlomo says *כָּל הַחַיִּים* – *all the living*. Ooh, that's an important word, *כָּל*. Because one person might test your free will in one way and another person a different way. Your wife tests your free will like this but your son tests it like that. Your daughter, she's a different test. The landlord also tests you and so does your mother-in-law. And so do all the relatives on your side. And on your wife's side. And your father and mother too; they began testing you before you married but now, after you're out of the house, it's a different type of test. And your brothers and sisters too.

And the more, the merrier. That's the gem of life – the numberless opportunities to deal with people the right way, to make them happy, to encourage them, to do *chesed* to people, to know how to handle people. And therefore the more people in the world, the more alive we are.

Of course, it's a big challenge. *Kol hachaim* means there are all kinds of people. There are mean people. There are bashful people. There are people who need your attention, your time. There are depressed people. There are angry people. There are arrogant, conceited people.

You know it's very hard to get along with a conceited man. If he's a humble man, it's easy to talk to him but if he's conceited, if he thinks too much of himself, you're not interested in getting along with him at all. But you're making a big mistake because he's sent to us as a gift. He's included in *kol hachaim*; if you can train yourself to get along with him you're living life to its fullest.

Angelic Wives

Here is a man married to a woman and she's a nuisance. You have to admit it, she is. So what? Is that a reason to go through life with alibis and excuses. Live life! Deal with it! Make yourself great! If your wife would be an angel then what's the use of having one? It's only because she's so far from

being an angel, that's why it pays to live in this world.

Now let's say you are unfortunate enough to have an angel for a wife – it happens sometimes. So then your father might be a nuisance or your father-in-law might be bothersome. And so, they're included in *kol hachaim*. Be the best son you can be to that father. To that father-in-law be the best son-in-law you can. To your husband – he's a little wild sometimes; he's not behaving – be the best wife you can. To your mother-in-law be the best daughter-in-law that you can. To your brothers and sisters, be the best sibling you can be.

That's why they're around! It's *bechirah* galore. It's a life worth living, a life of opportunity. And if somebody slinks off into a corner because he doesn't want contact with people, although to some extent he still has free will, he has deprived himself of some of the great opportunities that life offers.

Stealing From Everyone

Now, *יְחַבֵּר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים* means more than getting along with everyone. One more of the opportunities that living among others affords us is the great opportunity to take from others a lesson from their good qualities. That's included in being 'connected with all the living'. You have so many models around you because everybody has different virtues. Nobody has all bad qualities. And if you look at every person, you'll find at least one thing that you should try to kidnap for yourself.

Whatever you see that somebody else has, any good qualities that others have, you should try to take away from them. They won't lose them, don't worry. If somebody is a man who guards his tongue, a person who doesn't talk much, he counts his words and when he talks he's careful not to speak about people, try to imitate him. This man gets up early and he comes to *daven*. This man remains later in the shul. The one who gets up early maybe he leaves early, and this one maybe comes late but

he remains later. You steal the good qualities of both.

Different Folks, Different Strokes

Here is a man who is a *ba'al tzedakah*. He gives *ma'aser*. He gives more. Another person, he collects in addition to what he gives. When you see that, you shouldn't look at it stolidly. You're given life to be connected to the living. It means to learn from the living. I want to do that. I want to emulate that.

Here is a housewife who stands on her feet all day long and loyally prepares food and cares for everybody in the house. You have to study that. It's a lesson for you to emulate. Be loyal to your family. Train yourself to think of others like she does.

If somebody is studying Torah, that's what you'd like to be. If somebody is succeeding in understanding *emunah*, in becoming a *ba'al daas*, that's what you'd like to be. Somebody else, you see he smiles at people. He speaks softly to his wife. Human beings possess all types of good qualities and you're put in the world with them in order to learn from each one whatever you can. That's the way to utilize mankind.

And that's why we're in this world together with people. *בִּי מִי אֲשֶׁר יְחַבֵּר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים* – *If you're connected with all the living you can always be choosing*. You can always be collecting the pearls that everyone else possesses; a diamond here and a gem here, and little by little you'll become rich. You're rich with what life has to offer.

The Death of Opportunities

And that's why the *metzora* is *chashuv k'meis*. He's driven out of the camp and nobody can come close to him! He's a dead man walking in the sense that he loses the glorious opportunities of *kol hachaim*.

So what's the last word to sum up this subject? What is life? It's not breathing and eating. Life is opportunities, opportunities to make progress in the service of Hashem! And Shlomo Hamelech tells us that one of the most important and prevalent of

all opportunities of life is being connected to all the living. If he's *yechubar el kol hachaim*, if he's still living and still understands the opportunity of being connected with all the living, that's his *bitachon*, that's his hope.

And that's why we get up every morning with enthusiasm. You know some people wake up like grouches: "Oh no, not again." *Chas veshalom!* We love waking up again because it's another day of opportunities. And so we say, *מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לַפְּנֵיךָ*, "Oh, Hashem I thank you so much. It's so good to be alive! Another day of life! Another day of being connected to all types of people and being able to live life to its fullest."

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Joined With The Living

In this week's parshah we read about the Metzora, a fate comparable to death according to Chazal. As Rav Miller explains, death means the death of opportunity, primarily the opportunity of growing in the area of *bein adam l'chaveiro* by interacting with others. This week I will *bli neder* utilize my connection with others to grow and improve. Every night before I go to sleep I will spend a minute reviewing some of my interactions with others and think about whether I could have done better and whether there is some good *middah* I can learn from that particular individual.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

38 - Opportunities | **139** - Joined to the Living | **S-28** - Agadata Shabbos I | **853** - People Are Our Wealth | **E-75** - Live to Love Your Fellow Man

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QUESTION

Do you approve of celebrating Pesach in a hotel?

ANSWER

And the answer is I do not. I definitely disapprove of hotels for Pesach.

Now, some hotels are definitely not kosher lePesach despite the fact that they say so; but I'm not talking about that. And some hotels are kosher lePesach but they provide other kinds of activities that are not in consummate with Pesach spirit; and I'm certainly not talking about that either. I'm talking about a hotel where there are no Broadway shows. There's not even a television there. There's nothing there except *seforim* in the *beis hamedrash* and everything is 100% kosher – even better than in your own home. And still I say Pesach is a home celebration. The *Seder* is *kodesh kodoshim* in your own sanctuary, your own *Beis Hamikdash*.

It's an opportunity given by Hakadosh Baruch Hu that is intended to raise the spirit of the home. *אִישׁ שָׁה לְבֵית אָבֹת שָׁה לְבֵית*. Pesach is for a family, that's what it is. And the father gets together with his children in the hallowed atmosphere of the *Seder*, and he hands over to his children the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the birth of our people. Not some official singer or a *chazan* or even an official rabbi. The father! The father represents the whole background of Jewish tradition; and every child should be able to say, "My own father is handing this over to me like his father handed it over to him; and the chain goes back, link by link, to Har Sinai, link by link to *Yetzias Mitzrayim*." That's what Pesach should be. The home becomes a holy place.

I definitely disapprove of going away for Pesach. There are no two ways about it.

TAPE # 263 (April 1979)