

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

PARSHAS VAYEITZEI

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE WICKED MAKE US GREAT

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Part I. The Great and The Wicked

The Snake and the Mouse...

We'll open the subject with a true story. Once in a certain rural area of Pennsylvania the residents were complaining about a certain species of black snakes that seemed to be proliferating and overrunning the county. They weren't dangerous but they were a nuisance and so the sheriff came up with a plan. He offered the residents a bounty for every black snake brought in. Shoot a black snake and bring it in for a cash reward. I think it was \$20 for every black snake.

So all the people got busy. They were bringing dead black snakes from all over the county to the sheriff. It was wonderful. The Pennsylvanians made a lot of extra money that summer.

But the following year the farmers came to the legislature complaining. "Something's wrong! Our crops are being destroyed!" The fields were being overrun by field mice who made a job on the farmers' crops and were devouring everything. They never saw so many field mice before!

...Work Together

Until finally somebody discovered the connection between black snakes and field mice. One of the purposes of the black snakes in Creation was to keep the field mice in check. Black snakes enjoy the taste of field mice and so even though they might be a nuisance sometimes, they have an important purpose: they act as a counterweight to the mice. And so the legislators got busy now trying to look for some more black snakes and to import them back into their county.

Now, the whole Creation is like that. There are endless examples of how Hakadosh Baruch Hu made one thing opposite the other to maintain the proper equilibrium of the ecology. And that's what Shlomo Hamelech says in Koheles (7:14): **גַּם אֶת זֶה לְעֵמֶת זֶה עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים** – *Elokim made one thing opposite the other thing*. Koheles is telling us that all the phenomena of this world are planned by Hakadosh Baruch Hu to cooperate with each other. And even though we don't pay much attention and superficially it seems to us that this world is full of many unrelated things, if you study His creations you'll see that actually everything has a place and it's always **זֶה לְעֵמֶת זֶה** – *one thing is made opposite the other*, and that's the success of Creation.

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A Spiritual Pshat

But we'll see now how the Gemara (Chagigah 15a) explains this *possuk*. Our *Chachomim* tell us that it's not only in the functioning of the physical world that this principle holds true; even in the spiritual functioning of the world Hakadosh Baruch Hu employs this principle. And one example they bring of this phenomenon is **בָּרָא צְדִיקִים** – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu made righteous people*, **וּלְעֵמֶת זֶה** – *and opposite to the righteous*, **בָּרָא רְשָׁעִים** – *He made wicked men*. He purposefully sets the stage of history in this manner, where the *tzaddik* and *rasha* face off with each other.

Now, before we try to understand what they're telling us, it's important to know what it means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu "made" wicked people and righteous people. Because we know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't undertake to make anybody good or bad. That's one of the foundations of this world, that mankind comes into this world to exercise *bechirah*, free will.

Every person comes into the world with an opportunity to choose and anyone, man or woman, can become whatever he or she desires to be. The fact is that if she chooses so, even a simple housewife can excel and become greater than the greatest *tzaddik*. Of course, you cannot become a man if you happen to be a woman. You cannot become a giant if you happen to be born short. But within a certain realm, within a certain area, everyone is given the free will to excel. Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't make anybody choose one way or the other.

And therefore, we cannot say that this statement in Chagigah is telling us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu actually created righteous people and created wicked people. He created people, yes; but righteous and wicked, that they make themselves.

Placed with Purpose

So what does it mean here that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the *reshaim* and the *tzaddikim*? It means this. Hakadosh Baruch Hu looks ahead into the future and He knows what is going to happen;

He knows who is going to choose righteousness and who will choose to be not righteous.

So what does He do? When He sees that there's going to be a certain righteous man, a man who's going to exert himself to choose the right way in life, He wants to give him the opportunity to accomplish in this world. So He looks into the future and He finds a man who chooses to be wicked, a man with certain abilities, and He says, "I'm going to put them both together in this world; they're going to be in the same generation and in the same locale. And the purpose is to give the *tzaddik* an opportunity to be tested by the *rasha*."

And that's how our great men throughout history became great – because of *zeh le'umas zeh*. There was always somebody else who stood opposite them – someone *placed* opposite them – giving them opportunities to rise to the occasion.

Application Rejected!

Where do we find this? In Mesichta Avodah Zarah (2a), the Gemara tells that at the end of days Hakadosh Baruch Hu will make an announcement that all those who deserve reward, should come and take their reward. And naturally when reward is available, everybody is a customer. So all the nations will come; all the peoples of the world from all the periods of history will assemble and they'll say, "We're here. We apply."

There's a big conversation that the Gemara records there, a back and forth, and finally Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives them the news that they didn't qualify. He's sorry but there's only one nation that's going to get rewarded, and that's the Am Yisroel.

And then the *goyim* say, "Why did you choose the Am Yisroel? Just because they accepted your Torah? But did they fulfill Your commandments? Who says they obeyed the Torah?"

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to the nations as follows, "I'm going to bring witnesses to testify on behalf of My people. **יְתֵנוּ עֲרֵיהֶם וְיִצְדְּקוּ** – *Let them give their testimonies in order to demonstrate the righteousness of the Am Yisroel (Yeshaya 43:9)*."

Testimony of the Wicked

And so the Judge calls witness number one into the courtroom. **יָבֵא נִמְרוֹד וְיַעֲדֵר עַל אַבְרָהָם** – “Let Nimrod come,” says Hashem, “and he should testify about who Avraham was.”

You know who Nimrod was? He was the one who made it his business to oppose Avraham. And don't think he was a little nobody. In boxing, when you have to test a heavyweight you don't bring a bantamweight to compete with him. Heavyweights are only tested by heavyweights. And so a great man like Avraham Avinu couldn't be tested by a small *rasha* like Darwin or Mohammed or that other one, the *mamzer*. For an Avraham you have to bring somebody really big.

And there was nobody bigger than Nimrod! You know the Torah goes out of its way to describe his power, how he was a *gibor tzayid* and how he built big cities (Bereishis 10: 9-12). He was building one city after another. Some of his cities lasted almost down to today! Now, to us it seems as a parenthetical episode in history that doesn't belong in the Torah. The great power of an ancient, long forgotten ruler has no connection with the purposes of the Torah history. And so the whole thing seems to be a waste of words, telling us about the great career of Nimrod.

Greats of Antiquity

But now we understand that it didn't just happen in the generation of Avraham that Nimrod also happened to be there and so Avraham was forced to contend with him. Oh no; it was a set-up. **זֶה לְעֵמֶת זֶה עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹקִים** – *What happened was that Hashem saw Avraham's greatness, his potential, and that's why He created a Nimrod.*

All of Nimrod's achievements – his power, his wealth, his influence – were granted to him for one purpose by the *korei hadoros meirosh*, the One Who sees the generations beforehand. Hashem said, “Here's a boy coming up in this generation, a boy with tremendous potential. And I'm going to give him the opportunity to become great. I'll give him a Nimrod, a real tyrant, a real organizer, a genius, one

of the greatest men of antiquity, and Avraham will have the opportunity to buck a *rasha* like that.”

And so Avraham appeared in the middle of that cloudburst of idolatry – it was the great Avraham on one side and the great Nimrod on the other – and Avraham had whom to struggle against and that's what made him what he is. He became great just because he was able to withstand the power of Nimrod.

So now Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, “Let Nimrod come and testify that Avrohom did not worship idolatry, that he stood up and passed the test.” It means “The man who made Avraham Avinu great, the one who was placed there **זֶה לְעֵמֶת זֶה**, let him come and testify to Avraham's greatness.”

Summoned From the Trash

But that's only one example in the Gemara. It says there about another famous witness that will be summoned at the end of the days: *Eishes Potiphar*, the wife of Yosef's master. She'll be summoned now from the garbage can where she's been all these years. They'll pull her out of the trash and they'll say to her, “What do you have to say about Yosef?” **וְהָעֵדָה בְּיוֹסֵף שְׁלֹא נִחָשְׁד עַל הָעֲבֵרָה** – *And she'll testify that Yosef should not be suspected of any moral misdeed.* She's the best witness to testify because she tested Yosef every day.

It was **יָדַע יוֹסֵף אֶל יוֹסֵף יוֹם יוֹם** – *She spoke to him day by day* (Bereishis 39:10). We don't know what she said but you can be sure she was a difficult test for Yosef. He wasn't married, you have to know. And it wasn't just once a day. **בְּגָדִים שְׁלֹבֶנֶשׁ לּוֹ עֵרְבִית לֹא לְבָשָׁה** – *She changed her dresses every day twice and she came to tempt him constantly* (Yoma 35b). It was a terrible *nisayon*! And that's how Yosef became tremendous. Yosef Hatzaddik became Yosef Hatzaddik because of that wicked woman.

Placed With Potifar

And now we know why it happened that way. Because Potiphar could have had a wife who had no interest in other men besides her husband. She didn't have to be that kind of woman. Or she could

have been the type of wife who was never home. She was busy with the sisterhood someplace, planning teas, raising money for poor Egyptian orphans. Or she could have been a shopping lady; wife who's always out on the avenue looking for deals. She's never home.

But it “happened” to be she wasn't the type that ran around. She was always home, this wicked woman, and therefore she was always available. And now we know why that was. She was put there for one purpose – in order to make Yosef the successful man that he became.

You know, if Yosef HaTzaddik would have yielded, then there wouldn't have been any history of Yosef. It would have been finished and the Torah wouldn't bother to tell the whole story how he was sold by his brothers. It would have been hushed up. There's nothing to talk about and our forefathers wouldn't have gone down to Egypt. There wouldn't be a Yetzias Mitzrayim. Who knows what would have happened to the Jewish people?

Tzaddikim and Reshaim

Now, if you take a look inside the Gemara there (Avoda Zara *ibid.*) you'll see more examples of those who will be forced to testify on the great day. Nevuchadnezer will come and speak about how Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah stood up to him and wouldn't bow down to his idol even at the threat of death. Daryavesh will come and testify about Daniel's greatness, about how he continued to pray three times a day towards Yerushalayim even when it was forbidden. He continued the practice in the king's palace as he had done when he was a boy in Eretz Yisroel.

How did Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah become great? Because of Nevuchadnezer. How did Daniel become great? Because there was a king Daryavesh. And why was there a Nevuchadnezer and Daryavesh? גם את זה ולעמת זה עשה האלקים – Because when Hakadosh Baruch Hu saw that there would be a *tzaddik* in that generation, that's why He placed a *rasha* into that generation too. And at the

end of days, it'll become clear to everyone that it was because of this eternal principle of בָּרָא צְדִיקִים וְלָעֲמַת זֶה בָּרָא רְשָׁעִים that people rise to greatness.

Part II. Yaakov and The Wicked

Unequaled Diligence

Now, one of the witnesses who will come to testify at the end of days will be a character from this week's *sedrah*. It's our old friend Lavan. יְבוֹא לָבָן – “Let Lavan come,” says Hashem, וְיַעֲדֵר עַל יַעֲקֹב – “and he should testify about the greatness of Yaakov.” It means that Lavan is the one who was placed *le'umas* Yaakov – it was by means of Lavan that Yaakov became great.

Now we would think just the opposite. If you asked us, we would have said that Yaakov achieved his greatness because he was the *yoshev ohalim*; he was fortunate enough to sit in the tents of great people. He sat in the tent of his great parents, Yitzchok and Rivkah. And in addition to that, he was fourteen years in the tents of Shem v'Eiver; and during those years his diligence was unequaled. וַיִּשְׁכַּב בְּמִקְוֵם הַהוּא – The first time in fourteen years that he laid down to sleep was after he left the yeshivah (Vayeitzei 28:11, Rashi). In the yeshivah he slept only on his elbows at the table; he didn't lay down in a bed – he was afraid he might sleep too much.

Now, learning with *hasmadah* for fourteen years like that is quite an accomplishment. If any one of us would remain fourteen years in Mirrer Yeshiva, we would become somebody; fourteen years in the old Mir in Europe we would be a bigger somebody. But to listen to *shiurim* for fourteen years from that great *tzaddik*, Eiver? If Eiver would come here tonight and we'd hear one *shiur* from him we'd go home with something tremendous; we'd be different people altogether!

Source of Greatness

And so where did Yaakov become great? Where did he become Yaakov Avinu? There's no doubt in

our minds. It was in these tents in which he dwelled! What happened after that? After that, it was downhill from there. He had to make an undercover escape and he ended up in the house of Lavan. It was some house; Lavan was as mean and crooked as could be.

For us it would have been like a sojourn in *Gehanim*; we couldn't have taken it more than a week. But Yaakov took it for twenty years. And so in such a house it seems to us that there's not much chance for spiritual achievement.

But at the end of days we're going to find out just the opposite. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu will search for a witness to testify about Yaakov's greatness it's Lavan who is going to be called in. Not Yitzchok and Rivkah. Not Shem v'Eiver. Now, I'm sure they'd have good things to say, very good things. Yaakov became prepared in those tents. If it wasn't for those years, if it wasn't for those teachers, Yaakov wouldn't have succeeded with Lavan. But it's in the house of Lavan, that's where he *achieved* his greatness. In that most unlikely place, the most unlikely place to accomplish anything spiritual, that's where Yaakov became great.

Getting From The Go-Getter

How great? Let's hear a report of the progress that he made in the house of Lavan. Listen to what Yaakov said at the end of his sojourn in that house: *עִם לָבָן גִּרְתִּי ... וַיְהִי לִי שׂוֹר וְחֲמֹר צֹאן וְעֶבֶד וְשִׁפְחָה* – "I lived with Lavan and I acquired there oxen and donkeys, flocks and servants and maidservants" (Bereishis 32:5-6). You remember, in our *sedrah* Yaakov came to Lavan penniless; he had nothing. And now he was leaving Lavan with tremendous wealth. Herds, flocks, servants!

Now, to get property out of the house of Lavan was an especially big achievement because Lavan wasn't the kind of man who let anybody get any property. Lavan was out for property himself. Lavan loved one thing; besides himself he loved one other thing. Money!

You remember when Lavan saw the jewelry that Eliezer had given to Rivka? It says (Bereishis 24:30) *בְּרֵאת אֶת הַנְּזָם וְאֶת הַצְּמָרִים*, when he saw the rings and the bracelets, so Lavan said "Welcome, you blessed of Hashem." So we see what Lavan blessed for. Lavan lived for business. And so for Yaakov to leave with so much property, with herds and flocks and servants, that's a big accomplishment.

Acquiring The Glorious Future

But the Medrash tells us that there are hidden meanings in these achievements. Yaakov acquired more than property in the house of Lavan. He took other things too, more important things. So let's look at that *possuk* again and see how Chazal explain it.

וַיְהִי לִי שׂוֹר – So Chazal tell us, *zeh Yosef*, there I acquired a Yosef. Yosef is called *shor* in Tanach, *בְּכוֹר*, *שׂוֹרוֹ הָדָר לוֹ*, and the *possuk* here is hinting to that. It doesn't mean only that he gained a little boy named Yosef. Yosef means to have another *shevet*, to have a Menashe and Efraim, and all the greatness that eventually came from Yosef.

To achieve a Yosef could only happen after Yaakov had reached a certain degree of greatness that made him deserving of having such a son, such a future. And where did he achieve it? In the house of Lavan! Whatever Yosef means – it's a whole conglomeration of great accomplishments and a great future – Yaakov gained that in the house of Lavan.

וְחֲמֹר – And I also acquired a donkey. What does that signify? Besides for the donkeys that Yaakov took out of Lavan's house, what does it mean?

So our Sages tell us that it's Moshiach; because about Moshiach it says *עָנִי וְרֹכֵב עַל חֲמֹר* – a humble man riding on a donkey. And so the Moshiach that will someday develop from the house of Dovid – all the achievements that the *Yemos Hamoshiach* will bring to our nation and to the world – was accomplished already in the house of Lavan. Yehuda, the great-great-great grandfather of Moshiach was born to Yaakov in Lavan's house.

Cradle of Civilization

וְצֹאֵן – I also acquired flocks there. Who was that flock that Yaakov acquired? וְצֹאֵן אֵלָיו יְעֻרְאֵל – The Jewish nation is called the flock of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the *tzon kodashim*. It means that the whole future of the Am Yisroel throughout the generations, the multitudes of kosher men and women, of pious and kindly people who are gentle as lambs, grew out of the greatness Yaakov achieved in the house of Lavan.

The *possuk* continues וְעֶבֶד, that's Moshe eved Hashem. Moshe was already present in the house of Lavan. Yaakov achieved so much in the house of Lavan that he became worthy of a Moshe, the greatest man who would ever appear on the face of the earth. In the house of Lavan, Yaakov gained a Moshe Rabeinu; he gained a nation that is worthy of the highest, most successful of all people.

וְשִׁפְחָה – I acquired also a maidservant. It means Rus, who called herself *shifchasecha*, a maidservant (Rus 2:13). She declared that she is a handmaiden, she is ready to serve; to leave the gentile world and join us. And from her would come forth the House of Dovid. Yaakov became worthy of having that great woman join our people because of Lavan.

You know what the Sages are telling us? All the perfection that Yaakov achieved for himself and for his descendants was already wrapped up in the seed that was planted in that house. Not in the house of Yitzchok and Rivkah where Yaakov Avinu was at first; not in the house of Shem v'Eiver either. No. He acquired his true perfection in the most unlikely place: in the house of Lavan.

A Paragon Of Virtue

Now, Lavan was a very difficult father-in-law to live with. A *shver* like Lavan can be a big pain even if he lives in Australia and you're in Brooklyn. But to live in his house?! That's not easy. Yaakov suffered from his father-in-law, from the *middos* of Lavan and his lies and his treachery. And Yaakov was swallowing it. He was tolerating it and not for one week – for weeks and months and years.

If you have an employer and the employer cheats you out of your salary week after week and he does it with every kind of mean trickery, it is a masterpiece of good behavior if you can remain civil to him for a month, six months, a year. Yaakov took it in the best possible manner for so many years.

As much as Lavan cheated Yaakov and wronged him at every step, he behaved towards Lavan with the utmost loyalty. הָיִיתִי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְנִי הָרֶב – By day the heat consumed me, וְקָרַח בַּלַּיְלָה – and the frost at night (Vayeitzei 31:40). Yaakov was burned by the heat, but he wouldn't forsake the sheep in order to seek a shady spot to protect himself. In the cold frosty nights, he could have crept into his tent to save himself from being frozen. It's cold sometimes at night in Padan Aram, very cold, and Yaakov didn't have a stove to keep him warm. He could have crept into his tent and pulled ten blankets over him and forgotten about the outside world; but he didn't. He couldn't because he was working for someone else; he had a boss. It was a tremendous test of Yaakov's character and he passed it with flying colors.

Lavan Was Not Yisro

And that's how he became great. It's like sandpaper on wood. I never did it but I watched once when I was a little boy how a carpenter was sanding down wood to make a piece of furniture. It's not easy. You have to apply pressure and rub back and forth, back and forth. But that's how it becomes polished; all the rough edges are smoothed out by means of that pressure. And that's what happened in the house of Lavan – Yaakov was being sanded down.

Character is the same as wood. Perfection of the mind, perfection of character, is not gained easily. We need so many things to sandpaper us, to make us smooth and easy to deal with. To make us successful people, people who are good-natured, calm and patient and forgiving, we need that friction to sand us down. So Hashem sends things upon you. He sends people to sand you down.

And now you know why there was a Lavan! It wasn't an accident. You know, Lavan could have been a man like Yisro who was hospitable and pleasant; a philosopher, a man who was practicing all the *mitzvos* of the *seichel*, of the Chovos Halevavos. Why not?

No! Hashem placed Lavan there intentionally so that when Yaakov should come to Padan Aram, he'd find a Lavan who would cheat him at every step. It's wrong to think that Lavan happened to be there, and despite such an obstacle still Yaakov rose to the occasion and became great. No! Lavan was an obstacle put there originally to make Yaakov great.

Attaining Taryag

And Yaakov succeeded because he understood that! He understood that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was putting opportunities before him and because of that awareness, that's why he was able to become great. He was prepared for it and he achieved all the perfection that would benefit him and his posterity forever.

Now you know the real meaning of the Chazal that Rashi brings *עם לבן גרתי ותרתי מצות שמרתי* – “I dwelt with Lavan and I kept the Torah.” So people say a *pshat*, “I lived with a wicked man and despite that I kept the *taryag mitzvos*.” But learn now the real *pshat*: Yaakov was saying, “I lived with a wicked man and because of that, because of the way I lived with him, that's how I became what I became.” That's how we became the nation of Hashem that still keeps the *taryag mitzvos*. And it was due to the greatness of Yaakov, because he understood the principle of *גם את זה לעמת זה עשה האלקים*.

Part III. The Wicked World

Getting Practical

Now, it was spoken here at length more than once about the famous statement, *ma'aseh avos siman labonim* – it means that the lives of our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov were prophecies for the future. And therefore we study

the incidents of their lives as related in the Torah and how they reacted to them with the understanding that they are models for what will happen to their posterity.

And so we understand that this process of *גם את זה לעמת זה עשה האלקים* – Hashem made one opposite the other is a process that Hakadosh Baruch Hu made for the Jewish nation. Avraham and Nimrod, Yaakov and Lavan, Yosef and *eishes Potiphar*, those are only examples. Actually it's us. That's what we're learning now, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu plans our careers in the same way.

It means that just like our forefathers, we are constantly being given opportunities to attain greatness by means of the situations Hakadosh Baruch Hu purposefully places us in.

Only that what happens? We're not prepared for it at all because we don't understand the ways of Hashem in this world! That's why so many people allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the opposition and they go lost. So many Avrahams are going lost constantly. How many Yosefs finally *did* yield? We only know the successes; the failures are not known to us. So many Yaakovs failed with their fathers-in-law. So many could have chosen success and greatness; Hakadosh Baruch Hu set the stage for them by giving them difficult people, difficult situations as opportunities to become great. But they didn't understand what was going on.

Life Of Elevators

Now, this has to be explained and so we will quote from the *Mesillas Yesharim*. At the beginning of the first chapter of his great work he makes an important statement and we have to make our ears *k'afarcheses*, like funnels, to catch the following information: *כל עניני העולם נסיונות הם לאדם* – All the matters of this world are tests for man, everything is a test.

That's a very important statement but first we should understand the word *nisyonos*. *והאלקים נסה את אברהם* (Bereishis 22:1) means *Elokim uplifted Avraham*. *נסה* is a cousin of *נשא* which means to

raise up. It means that when Hakadosh Baruch Hu sends a *nisayon*, it's intended as an opportunity to elevate one's self to become more perfect; to achieve that for which we were created. That's why we're in this world. We're not here to remain in one place; we're here to make progress, to become better. And all of the things that come across our path in this life are for that purpose.

No matter what happens, no matter what event transpires, no matter whose path you cross, it's for one purpose: to test you. That's included in *hashgachah pratis*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is concentrating on every one of the Am Yisroel day and night forever – that's all He does – and *everything* that He's doing is planned for your perfection. And the way you react to that test, that's your success in life.

It means that every person that is sent to you is a test. Let's say the person is bothersome, he is arrogant, he is a bore, he is not too smart, and nevertheless you utilize the opportunity to treat him properly, you have consideration for him. And at the end when he goes away he has a good opinion of you – he walks away thinking, “That's a great guy” – so you have passed the test. He was placed there purposefully and by choosing properly you acquire a *shleimus*, a perfection, that will stay with you forever.

Life on The Rotisserie

Now there are all kinds of improvement, all forms of *shleimus*. We need improvement in patience. Yes, we have to learn patience. We need improvement in how we treat others. We need improvement in *zerizus*. We have to learn alacrity, to overcome indolence and lethargy. We need improvement in kindness, in generosity. We need improvement in learning how to keep our mouths closed. A man has so many facets to his character and each one has to be smooth and solid. And that's why Hashem is on the job. He's sending you all types of people, all types of situations, that are capable of perfecting you.

We can compare it, let's say, to when you buy a duck and you want it well done. So you hang it up on the rotisserie and the spit turns above the fire so that the duck should be well roasted in every cranny, every corner. That's why it spins; it turns constantly so that no raw spots should remain.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu puts us through life on the rotisserie. He's turning us this way and that way, giving us every opportunity, all types of “*reshaim*” to deal with so that we should be well done. But not only *reshaim* in the sense of Lavan. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're contending with evil men. If you hear this, don't apply it in the wrong way. *Bara tzadikim u'bara reshaim* is only an example – that's when you see it more clearly. But “He created one opposite the other” means everybody! People are different from one another – sometimes a righteous man has to contend with another righteous man too – and those differences were all planned.

Your 'Wicked' Siblings

That's why you start out life as a boy, as a girl, because first you're being tested, how do you behave towards your brothers and sisters? That's an opportunity to sand down a lot of rough edges you have. You shouldn't pass up that *nisayon*; you won't forever be in one house with them. When you leave your parents' house, the opportunity is gone forever.

So if you're still young, still unmarried, you're still in a house full of siblings, do your best to be successful with them. If you can get along with them, you gain the perfection for which that opportunity was created. Your brothers and sisters were placed there just for that. Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose just the right ones, with all those idiosyncrasies and quirks of nature, to give you opportunities to no end.

And also a father and mother. A father and mother are great tests. Not only so that you should fetch a glass of water for your father. Of course you should always say, “Ma, I want to serve tonight. You sit at the table. Let me have the *mitzvah*.” A yeshivah

boy too. No harm if the son volunteers sometimes to wash the dishes. But more than *kibbud av v'eim*, it's how you deal with your parents every day. It's not always easy but the wise son and the wise daughter rise up to the occasion. And that's why these parents were given to you.

The Perfect Wife

And one day you'll be married and another opportunity comes. A wife is an opportunity and a husband is too. Marriage is given in order for a person to gain *shleimus*. That's what *eizer kenegdo* means. He has the help of someone who is against him and she has the help of someone who is against her. Because a wife and a husband are two different kinds of people, two different natures.

A wife is not always honey. There's sometimes a sting too. It's only the Torah that's compared to the perfect wife. The Torah is טוב וְלֹא רָע בְּלִי יָמֵי חַיֶּיהָ (Mishlei 31:12); only the Torah *does good and no harm all the days of her life*. But a flesh and blood wife is human. So the foolish husband says, "With this wife, I can't make it. I just can't with her." But Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Look, I know what I'm doing. I've been in this business for a long time and you can trust Me – that's the one made especially for you. She'll test you, she'll nag you, she'll burn the supper sometimes, she'll burn your feelings too, but that's your success in life. That's the great opportunity of life."

When you become a mother-in-law or you become a daughter-in-law and you're being tested; so what does the thoughtless daughter-in-law say? "If I had a different mother-in-law then things would be different but with *this* woman I can't get along." Oh no! This woman is the perfect one for you. Hashem chose her especially for you! What does the mother-in-law say? "That's what my son had to choose?! Of all the fish in the sea, this is the one?!" And so both of them fail the test. It's a test!

A daughter-in-law, she may have a difficult mother-in-law but she bears it. She tolerates the burden and always smiles; she's always speaking

with diplomacy, with kindness. And so she is going to gain the full measure of *shleimus*, that perfection for which the situation was created.

Landlords and Neighbors

So let's say you have a landlord and it seems to you that he's the meanest fellow in the world. He wants to raise the rent. Now had you been a landlord, what you would have done is a different question; but you imagine he's not being fair with you. And therefore the question is what do you do about it. So the first thing is and the most important thing is to know he's put there for you.

In some cases a man has a neighbor or neighbors who are there for the purpose of affording him opportunities; all types of opportunities. Opportunities to resist influence. Opportunities to be kind. Opportunities to be a *mevater*, to overlook things.

So here's a man who has trouble with his neighbor but he doesn't understand what's doing. He says, "If only I had a different neighbor. If only I could move someplace else, a different block."

No, no; that's dodging your responsibility. Because all these people who cause you trouble are put there for your benefit. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has foreseen what's going to happen in your life and He's making use of His great principle of *zeh le'umas zeh*.

Living Emunah

Now, the examples and opportunities are endless; I'd like to talk to you more about the subject, but my time is up. I have work to do and I'm working overtime now. But we must not leave out one important point. All of our talk tonight won't mean much unless we add a certain ingredient into the recipe; there is a certain something which is essential in this matter, and that is the ingredient of *emunah*.

Emunah! The great men understood that nothing happens by itself. They understood that every phenomenon is occasioned by Hakadosh

Baruch Hu, and that's why instead of being angry at what happened to them, instead of complaining, they understood that it was a gift to be utilized; and they rose to the occasion and made full use of it. And that's why they succeeded. Not in spite of the other person but because of them. They understood that it was all planned, and that it was planned on the principle of *gam es zeh leumas zeh asah Elokim*.

Whenever we are confronted by difficult people and difficult situations, we have to realize they're put there for our benefit. *Emunah* means awareness that we're being put through these tests in order to have us well done. We're in the rotisserie and we're turning exactly where Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to turn, turning to face exactly who He wants us to face. And if we utilize our lives properly, we become perfect in every facet of our character. We rise to the occasion by using our free will choice in the best possible way.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Living With the Lesson

This week I will practice living with the Torah principle of *zeh le'umas zeh*, recognizing that every difficult person I come across was placed there by Hakadosh Boruch Hu for my own perfection. Every day this week I will *bli neder* choose one "difficult" person in my life and I will deal with him or her with the awareness that Hakadosh Boruch Hu put that person there for me with the intention of perfecting my character and preparing me for Olam Habo.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

- 8** – The Wicked Make Us Great | **62** – A Season for Everything
- 491** – I Created All of Them For You | **989** – Gift of Opposition



QUESTION

How should we react to the news that the Pope made a Jewish nun a saint?

ANSWER

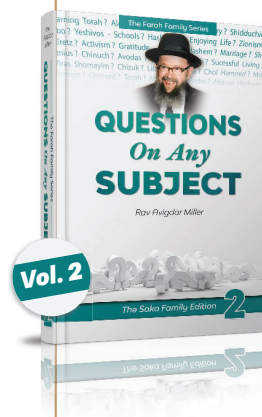
What the Pope does is none of our business. Only it's a great pity on a Jewish soul that went lost. That's all.

The saint is now in Gehenom and she is getting the treatment that all the *poshei Yisroel* get. Because we say, "You want to be a saint? So why weren't you a *frum* Jewish woman? You have to forsake your people?"

And therefore, the whole subject is alien to our minds. It's one more soul that went lost.

So just because she's a Catholic saint, what of it? And suppose she was a drug addict lying in a cellar, drugged with narcotics, is she any better off? And therefore, it's a pity on all of them.

TAPE # 641 (May 1987)



Are you interested in more Q&A's on the subject of lost Jews?

- What should I do about Jewish missionaries in my neighborhood?*
- Are Jewish atheists part of the Jewish people?*
- How should I deal with my mother who married a gentile?*
- And much much more...*

Stay tuned for the Chapter 'Lost Jews' in the upcoming Questions On Any Subject - Volume 2

Only a few copies of Volume 1 still left in print. Almost 500 pages of Q&A's. Order Now.

