

# TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

PARSHAS TETZAVEH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## THE AVODAH OF AROMA

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## Part I. The Sweet Savor

### The Sweet Savor

Among the delights that our nation possessed in the days of old (Eicha 1:7), the things that went lost with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, was the mitzvah of ketores. וְעָשִׂיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטָר קֶטֶרֶת – And you should make an altar for the burning of incense (Shemos 30:1). A golden altar was set up in front of the kodesh kodoshim, וְהִקְטִיר עָלָיו אֶהְרֵן קֶטֶרֶת סָמִים בְּבֹקֶר, בְּבֹקֶר – and every morning the kohen would burn on it a specified concoction of spices which created a sweet fragrance that spread out through the House of Hashem (*ibid.* 7).

But not only in the Beis Hamikdash; it was a delight that traveled far and wide. The entire Yerushalayim they smelled the fragrance of the ketores burning in the Mikdash. And not just a little bit. בְּלָה שְׁבִירֹוּשָׁלַיִם אֵינָה צְרִיכָה לְהִתְקַשֵּׁט מֵרִיחַ קֶטֶרֶת – A girl getting ready for her chasuna didn't have to bother with perfume because the fragrance from the ketores was enough. Even as far as Yericho they enjoyed the fragrance: נָשִׁים שְׁבִירִיחוֹ אֵינָן צְרִיכוֹת לְהִתְבַּשֵּׂם מֵרִיחַ קֶטֶרֶת – The women in Yericho didn't bother with perfume; the fragrance of the ketores that

wafted over from the Beis Hamikdash was enough (Yoma 39b).

### Secret of the Savor

Now, I won't claim to know the secrets of burning incense in the Beis Hamikdash but one thing I can do; I can quote from the Rambam. The Rambam after all is a reliable source – not only the Briskers; everybody accepts the Rambam – and in his Moreh Nevuchim (3:45) he explains the mitzvah of ketores as follows. He says that the mind of a person generally feels elevated in the presence of a good fragrance and it's the *ratzon Hashem* that when you approach the place of His service, or even if you think about it, you should feel a special appreciation for that place.

That's the secret of ketores according to the Rambam – Hashem wants the incense molecules to be wafted through the air into your nostrils and relay the message to your brain: "Ahh! Geshmak! Right here, the place of *avodas Hashem*, this is the place to be; this is the sweetness of life." It's like when you walk into a flower store and the fragrance of the bouquets tingles your sense of smell; it's delightful! You feel a certain appreciation for that place; you like that florist shop.

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That was the purpose of the *ketores*, the Rambam says. It had a peculiarly alluring fragrance, something especially delightful, out of the ordinary, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted that this fragrance should be felt only in connection with the Shechinah. You feel a certain inspiration, an admiration and a love for that place where you experienced that rare fragrance. It created in your mind a love, an honor, for the House of Hashem.

### **Cheap Perfume**

Now, it doesn't mean of course that anything that smells good is good; because anybody can put on perfume. I'll tell you a little story. Once I was sitting in a bus and behind me I smelled a fragrance. Well, finally I had to get up and walk out by my stop. I was walking by and who was sitting behind me? An old janitor in overalls. He had squirted himself with perfume. So you see how much an index of importance perfume is.

The Am Yisroel however, we perfume only according to the will of Hashem. We perfume only what's important because that's the purpose – to create in the mind of the one who has a nose, a sense of what's really important.

### **Premium Perfume**

That, by the way, explains a queer *takanah* that Ezra made when he came to Eretz Yisroel. The Gemara says that he made a *takanah* that the peddlers who sell spices and cosmetics for women should be allowed to come into every town to sell their wares. And even though there are already people in the town who have the same kind of business, they shouldn't be able to claim that the peddlers are being *masig gevul*; that they're illegally competing by coming into towns where there are already established perfume stores. No. Ezra said that those who sell spices for women could come in every town because it's a *mitzvah* for married Jewish women to use cosmetics and we want to be absolutely sure that they are readily available.

After all, what's the most important thing in your house? The envelopes of cash under your mattress you're hiding from the IRS? That's important but it's not most important. Maybe the *mezuzos*? The *seforim*? No, all that is nothing compared to a wife. Your wife is the most important thing. Even if you have a little *shul* in your house with a *sefer Torah* there, it's nothing compared to a wife.

And therefore the way you treat your wife is more important than anything else in the house. So how is the husband reminded? So his wife puts on a little bit of perfume and therefore a man walks into his house and there's a sweet fragrance; *ooh wah*, now he's impressed. Now he remembers what's really important in the house.

### **Advice for Married Women**

Ezra understood that – he understood the lesson of the *ketores* that a person's mind is affected by things as superficial as smell and so Ezra said that this is the *ratzon Hashem*. A man should always be reminded of what's really important in this world, and therefore, in order that the perfumes should always be readily available for the *nashim tzidkaniyos*, the perfume peddlers were given special leeway that nobody else had.

While we're on the subject I'll take the liberty of repeating one of my aphorisms, one of my pieces of advice to married women: "Smell good and keep quiet."

Once a man took me in his car somewhere and he said to me, "My wife was once a *talmidah* of yours many years ago and she heard your advice, what you said smelling good and keeping quiet, and she fulfills it fifty percent."

Well, fifty percent, that's also something.

### **A Lesson for Us**

Now, this secret of the *ketores* is an important lesson: What's good, that's what we have to make *ketores* for. You can't rely on *kedusha* to make an impression by itself; you can't rely on holiness to

announce its holiness. You have to do things to make people know what's important.

Not only by means of perfume. It's a lesson in general – our minds require encouragement for good attitudes. That's why Gemara tells us that כל עיר שגגותיה גבוהין מבית הכנסת – any city where the roofs of the houses are higher than the synagogue roof, לסוף הרבה – the end will be, that city will be destroyed (Shabbos 11a). It's a halacha; every Jewish community is responsible for that.

Now, it doesn't apply when you live among gentiles because they won't listen to you anyhow; and therefore it's permissible for Jews also to build houses taller than the synagogue. But in a Jewish community, where only Jews live, that's the *din*, the shul must be the tallest building. I remember in the olden days, in the small towns of Europe, the big building in every small town was the shul; that *din* was observed.

And where do we learn this from, that the synagogue roof must be the tallest? In the *Sefer Ezra* (9:9) – Ezra, you see, understood this subject – he says, לְרוֹמָם אֶת בַּיִת לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ, that we must uplift the House of our G-d. Which means, we have to demonstrate to the world that the synagogue, the place where we *daven* and study Torah, the place where we serve Hashem, that's the highest thing in the world.

### The Truth Unmasked

Rav Ashi once said, אֲנִי עָבְרִי לְמַתָּא מְחַסְיָא דְלֵא חֲרָבָה, – “I saved Masa Mechasya from becoming destroyed” (*ibid.*). What did he do? He saw that one man had built a tall house, taller than the shul, so he sent messengers and told them to smash the top story in. He said, “Crush the top floor, so it shouldn't be taller than the *beis knesses*.” And Rav Ashi took credit for that; he said, “That's how I saved Masa Mechasya from being destroyed.”

Now, why should a city be destroyed just because one Jew sinned? Let *him* be destroyed! The answer is because it's everybody's obligation. The whole

town by keeping quiet agreed unanimously that the shul isn't most important. And even if they'll say it's not so, it has an effect; it masks the truth.

Because the truth is that the place of *avodas Hashem*, that's the place that has to be admired most by us. And the regular homes, therefore, have to be lower than the shul. It's *gashmiyus*, after all, a house. The house is *gashmiyus*. Now, you can be sure that in the ancient days every home was a little *mishkan*, a place of Shechinah – not in the last hundred years; I'm talking way back, every home was a place where the Shechina dwelt. But after all, it's a place where you sleep and you eat. Other things you do and so it's *gashmiyus*. And therefore, it was a mitzvah to uplift the House of Hakadosh Baruch Hu; it should stand way above the roofs of the people's homes as a monument to the importance of *avodas Hashem* in our lives.

### Raising the Mind

It's a question however. Why do we have to raise it up? Don't we know what's important in this world? Am I so small-minded that I need to see it? And if the wealthy man will be insistent and he'll make his house taller than the shul, will anyone think that his home is more important?

And the answer is yes. Because as much as we try to live with our *seichel*, our intellect, it needs support. The service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu has to stand out in our lives above all of our regular pursuits. The most important of all things in our lives is *l'romeim* to uplift the *beis Elokeinu*; to make a big fuss about being a Jew, a big fuss about Torah and mitzvos, a big fuss about learning, a big fuss about Gemara, a big fuss about a *lamdan*, about this *gadol baTorah*, or this *sefer* of Torah and that yeshiva.

But not only to make a fuss. You have to make it nice. You have to make it beautiful. It should smell good too. Everything associated with *avodas Hashem* should be made sweet-smelling. That's what the *ketores* is saying; Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't rely merely on your intellect, that you should understand on your own that the *avodas Beis Hamikdash* is the

sweetest of all things. No; He encouraged that feeling by means of making the Mikdash smell good! And that's expected to be an important lesson for us. We are expected to take the cue from Hashem and utilize the lesson of being *maktir ketores* in front of everything connected to the Torah.

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## Part II. Aromatic Ideals

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### A Career of Ketores

Now, if we are serious about making a career out of this lesson of the *ketores*, of elevating the honor of *avodas Hashem*, of everything *kodesh* – and we should be serious about it – it would be a good idea to listen well to what a great man said about this subject.

Rabbeinu Yonah in Sha'arei Teshuvah (3:148) is talking about a person's purpose in the world and he says like this: **עַתָּה חַיִּיב אָדָם לְשׁוּם לְבוֹ בְּכָל עֵת** – A person is obligated to focus his mind at all times, **לְכַבֵּד אֶת ה'** – towards the function of honoring Hashem with all of his words and raising His stature. **וְכֹאשֶׁר יִתְיַצֵּב בְּתוֹךְ הָעָם וַיְדַבֵּר עִם חֲבֵרָיו** – And whether he is standing among fellow Jews, strangers, or among his friends, **יִתְבּוֹן בִּינָה וַיְדַקֵּק וַיִּשְׁגִּיחַ בְּכָל מוֹצֵא שְׂפָתָיו ... לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׂבְחָ עֲבוֹדָתוֹ וְתַהֲלַת יִרְאָתוֹ וּלְשִׂבְחָ עוֹבְדָיו וַיִּרְאֵי** – he should put meticulous thought, calculated thought, into the words that come out of his mouth that they should be words of praise of the service of and fear of Hashem, and praise of those who serve and fear Hashem.

Rabbeinu Yonah is telling us here that we have a job to do – not just a job, but a program for life. As much as possible, our business is to make known that everything associated with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that's what's most beautiful in this world. It means we're expected to be propaganda agents for Hashem, for *avodas Hashem*.

### The Russia Hoax

You know, I remember when the Soviet empire was still in existence, in America there were thousands of Russian spies. America was

honeycombed with Soviet agents. What was their function? They had one job; to spread propaganda in favor of Mother Russia. They were expected to mingle with the people and to put in a good word; to always speak up for Russia.

I was once in the post office standing in line waiting for my turn and there was a man there asking people to sign his petition that America should stop producing nuclear arms. "We're wasting our money on nuclear weapons," he said to me, "instead of feeding people like they do in Russia." He was telling me stories about how in Russia everyone is eating well and everyone is happy.

I made a big fuss in the post office. I said "You're a communist front!" It's true. They're communist agents, that's what they are.

They were spread out everywhere! And whenever they could, every opportunity, they would put in a good word for Communism. In the news, on the college campuses, in government offices, they were always speaking up about the glories of communism. It was their job.

### Sheluchei D'Rachmana

*L'havdil elef havdalos*, that's our job in this world! Only that instead of being an agent of *sheker*, instead of propagandizing about false ideals, Rabbeinu Yonah is telling us that every Jew should feel like he's sent into this world as an agent of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He should consider himself a propagandist for the truth, always on the lookout for opportunities to speak up for everything connected to Hakadosh Baruch Hu; to raise up *avodas Hashem* in the eyes of the people.

Let's say you're going someplace, you're going to a *chasuna* or some family gathering, so make a plan beforehand. "I'm going to use the opportunity to propagandize for the honor of *avodas Hashem*. I'll speak about the new yeshiva they're building on Ocean Parkway. About how beautiful it is, how much nicer Flatbush will be because of that building." Even if you're just coming out of a yeshiva – you went in



for a minute to drop off something – you should say, “How beautiful the building is inside! It’s so clean, so nice.”

Don’t say, “It’s dirty in there. I saw pieces of paper on the floor.” Say only good things. Praise Lakewood. Praise Chaim Berlin. Praise Mirrer Yeshivah. Praise all the places of Torah. Make it your job to do it. And if you’re *megazem* a little bit, if you exaggerate a little, no harm.

### **The Only Beauty**

Our job in life is to teach mankind that the only beauty in this world is *avodas Hashem*. Speak about how good it is to learn Torah. Even though you yourself may not learn Torah too much, but *this* surely you can do! Praise the learning of Torah! Speak up and tell everybody about the glory of learning Torah, the importance of being a *lamdan*.

Find ways of speaking about the glory of *mitzvos*. Speak up about the glory of *tznius* and *ahavas Yisroel* and *shemiras halashon*. Speak about the importance of *kedushas habayis*, of *shalom* between husband and wife, the importance of obeying the word of Hashem in every area of our existence. Talk about it to your children, to your friends, your siblings. Speak about how what’s important, what’s *chashuv*, is *avodas Hashem*.

### **What’s Important?**

It’s a big job because among the *umos ha’olam* it’s always the opposite – unimportant things are always made to smell good. Movies, romance, stadiums, music, concerts, art, sports. All the unimportant things, they’re making important.

It’s a very great non-approval of the gentiles when you see big newspaper headlines: This and this team got this man as a player for them. Big letters! There’s nothing more stupid than interest in sports. A fellow gets up with a piece of wood, and gives a crack with the edge of the bat on the ball, and everybody is wild with excitement. That’s important?!

A little boy, sitting in the corner of a *beis medrash*, learning Mesillas Yesharim, *that’s* important! A mother raising *frum* children in a crowded apartment, *that’s* important. But a man hitting a baseball? The most unimportant thing, they’re raising it up to the sky.

You’ll ask me, don’t I believe in exercise? Absolutely I believe in exercise, in fresh air. Very good! By all means, go onto a field and run around a little bit, kick the ball around. But to sit on a hard chair and get hemorrhoids while watching others play? Sports in itself is a stupidity invented by the *umos ha’olam*.

### **Important Art**

Art? Art for the sake of art is nothing but foolishness. Now some people will bridle when they hear such ‘*apikorsis*’. But I’m an *apikoris* when it comes to art! There’s nothing to it. A good photograph is better than any painting.

If he’s trying to compete with a good camera, he’ll never succeed. So because he can’t compete with a good camera, instead he tries something else. He goes off and makes crazy dots and dashes and he smears a brush over the canvas and he sells it for \$10,000 to some foolish *nouveau riche* who wants to adorn his house with something he doesn’t understand.

If you ask him what it is, he’ll tell you that it’s “Springtime in Afghanistan.” He says it with a straight face but his befuddled guests are wondering what they’re looking at. “Do you see over there, that line sticking out?” he says. “That’s the tail of the tiger hiding in the brush.” It’s no tail! The painter by accident rubbed his finger on the canvas so they imagine it’s a tiger tail. *Art shmart*; it means nothing to us.

Of course, I know it’s not easy to say these things, because all around you, even the *frum* world has already been flavored by the odors of the *umos ha’olam* – and when people become accustomed to bad smells, they begin to think it’s normal. And so I

understand that I get a bad name by knocking these things. But I do it anyway because there's no choice. We're in a battle! And the other side has no pity upon us. They're not sparing words on our account so let's not spare words on them. Belittle their important things. Don't be afraid to pull punches.

### **A Barrage of Good Words**

But at the same time, while we're shooting a barrage at the enemies of righteousness, at the purveyors of stupidity, it's even more important to shoot out a barrage of good words about *our* way of life. We should speak up, always, without stop, to defend what's good and to glorify it.

So suppose you're sitting at your table with your children, your family and you want to do this, so you say, "Children, *davenen* is a pleasure!" And while you're saying it, you rub your hands together like this. "*Davenen* is a pleasure! Ah!" Say that to them. They'll never forget it. Speak about that in your family.

Prepare your table talk that it should be propaganda for *avodas Hashem*. Speak to them of the honor of *rabbanim*, of *roshei yeshivos*, of *talmidei chachamim*. Speak about the importance of respecting all those people who represent the knowledge of the Torah. Praise the *mitzvos*. Elevate them to the sky. That's the table-talk of a loyal Jewish home. It's a home where they're still burning the *ketores* every day in front of the *kodesh kodoshim*.

### **Trucks of Glory**

Look for excuses to talk. Here's a man walking down the street with his wife and his children and there's a big truck, half a block long, going down the street. On the side of the truck in big letters, *chalav Yisroel*. Do you know what an opportunity that is? Say, "Look at that! Such a big Jewish truck! A big truck of *avodas Hashem*!"

I remember not long ago you couldn't get *chalav Yisroel* in America. When I came back from Europe, a farmer came once a month, a Jewish farmer, and brought us milk from his cow. It was never fresh,

and it was always whole milk. And now, *chalav Yisroel* in big letters on the truck. Tell your children that you're excited about it.

Ooh, and right behind it, a big Kemach truck; all *yashan*, all kosher provisions. The fact that the Jews came to Williamsburg now and began to manufacture kosher food products and advertise them everywhere in the world, that's a tremendous *kiddush Hashem*. Don't think it's a small thing. It could be they did it for their business but we have to do our business by propagandizing about it.

People have to write books if they can. You have to write articles. And every person should make his tongue the implement. Your tongue has to speak up for Torah, for *mitzvos*, for *emunah*. If you're a *melamed*, talk about it to your *talmidim*. Find ways of slipping it in.

### **A Function of Creation**

Even an English teacher should think about this program. A teacher of *limudei chol* can have a tremendous influence raising up *avodas Hashem* in the eyes of his students. An old man from Frankfurt am Main, once told me that when he was a child they had a high school there for *frum* boys and he said that from the afternoon teachers he learned more *yiras Shomayim* than anybody else. All the other teachers talk about other things so let him be an agent for Hashem and talk about *yiras Shomayim*, and *mussar*, and good *middos*. Talk about learning Torah *b'shkidah*, being diligent in learning, about the greatness of doing *mitzvos*. Always look for opportunities to propagandize in the honor of *avodas Hashem*.

And therefore we have a big job to do in the world today. Rabbeinu Yonah says this is our function in this world. Pay attention! **בִּי זֶה** – *This function you just heard here*, of praising *mitzvos*, praising Torah learning, praising *davenen*, praising *yeshivas*, praising *frum* girls and *frum* women, praising all the people that serve Hashem, **מֵעֲקָרֵי יְצִירַת הָאָדָם** – *is one of the foundations of the reason why a man is created!* A tremendous statement to

say that. I couldn't say it myself. Rabbeinu Yonah is saying it, however. **מְעַקְרֵי יְצִירַת הָאָרֶם!** This obligation of praising good things is the foundation of a man's creation in this world.

So let's do it right now. That's our job in life! And whenever you get a chance, don't wait for tomorrow. Every time you're speaking to anybody – that's what Rabbeinu Yonah says – make it your business, that a *terumah*, part of your conversation, should be for Hashem.

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## Part III. Aromatic People

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### A Nation of Service

Now, included in this subject of beautifying whatever is connected to Hashem is the great program of raising up the stature of the Am Yisroel. After all, why is the Beis Hamikdash most important? Why was the Beis Hamikdash the place where the unique *ketores* was burned? Because it was the place that represented *avodas Hashem*. And what is Bnei Yisroel? They are the *ovdei Hashem*! Some more, some less, but the Jewish people are the ones who spend their lives in the service of Hashem.

And that means that praising the Am Yisroel has to be one of the most important subjects of our conversation. And don't think it's a small thing because the *yetzer hara* is a very powerful force in the world; and the same way the outside world makes all of *avodas Hashem* unimportant and foolish and odorous, the Orthodox Jew is also made to smell bad in the eyes of the world. The world has been convinced for a long time that the Orthodox are no good. And the more Orthodox he is, the worse it is. On *reshaim* there is always a *limud zechus* but on the Orthodox Jew, never.

### Dirty Jews

I remember once there was a man who worked for AIPAC, The American Israel Political Action Committee. He was the president or their executive director and he once made a statement in public; he said that he never went to Brooklyn because he

doesn't like to be around Orthodox Jews. "They're smelly," he said. The New York Times loved that – they printed it twice.

Because who smells the worst among all the nations? Is it the black man? No, of course not. The Puerto Rican? No. The Italian? No. The world says that it's the Jew who smells the worst. Who is most hated in the world, the most despised? The Jew.

How is it that the UN today always votes against Israel? They speak of *Medinas Yisroel* as if it was the worst. Now, I'm not a big patriot of the State of Israel – far from it – but the whole UN should say the Arabs are always right? It's only because the Jew is always maligned, always slandered.

### Jewish Antisemites

And by the way, very many Jews are so influenced by the opinions of the *goyim* that the Jews themselves become anti-Semites. Reform Jews, assimilated Jews, they're ashamed of being Jewish. And so even though once upon a time, that's all it was, the gentiles, but today they have a great number of allies among the Jews. The Reformers today are very busy belittling the *frum* Jews.

And the truth is it rubs off on us; no question it has an effect on us. That's why we find observant Jews who sometimes ridicule other *frum* Jews. A woman from Virginia, an observant woman, visited Boro Park and she called me up. She is going back now and she said, "I'm happy to be going back. Boro Park is too crowded. And they're all on programs too."

I told her, "You know what you are saying? You are doing a terrible crime! That's how you speak about our best people? You are talking about the best people in America."

Except maybe for Williamsburg – Williamsburg is even better. But Boro Park is the second best! You walk there and it's blocks and blocks of *shomrei mitzvos*; *mezuzos* on every door. And inside, the homes are filled with children! Every house is a beautiful Beis Hamikdash of *kedusha*.

## Handsome Jews

And that's the only beauty we recognize. To us there's nothing in the world as handsome as a Jew who keeps the Torah; and the more he keeps, the more beautiful he is. In Yiddish when we described a good Jew, an upstanding Jew, we used to say "Ah sheineh Yid." Now actually it means 'a handsome Jew' but we use that word because to us every decent *frum* Jew is good looking. And if he's not a *shomer mitzvos*, he's not beautiful. He's a cripple, deformed; something is funny with him if he's not a *frum* Jew. But a *frum* decent Jew? Nothing is more beautiful.

And so we have a big job ahead of us. We have to speak up for the Jewish people, always making them more and more beautiful; always speaking of them with admiration.

Now, this already you'll think is not for you. "Who am I?" you'll say. "Am I Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Berditchiver that I should speak on behalf of the Klal Yisroel?"

And the answer is, everybody is expected to speak up for the Am Yisroel. וִירְקֵיךָ וְיִשְׁגִּיחַ בְּכָל מוֹצֵא וִירְאֵי לְשִׁבְחָ עוֹבְדֵי וִירְאֵי ... שְׁפָתַי - *You have to be careful that there should always come out of your mouth words of praise for those who serve Hashem.* And it says there, בְּכָל עֵת - *at all times!* It means as much as possible we have to adorn the Am Yisroel.

## Speak About Others

Of course, I don't expect a Satmarer to go all out, let's say, for Lakewood. Naturally, a Satmarer sees the advantages of his own people more easily; and in Lakewood they like the Lakewooders. But you shouldn't limit yourself. You know, I'm not a Satmarer but I can say many wonderful things about Satmar. I'm not a Lubavitcher but I have many good things to say about them too.

And so everyone should ask themselves, "Am I fulfilling this function of a Jew, of making the Am Yisroel beautiful?" Where is the good word for plain *frum* Jews? The Williamsburg Jew? He and his wife

are raising a big family. They are sacrificing to bring up Jewish boys and girls with purity, with *tznius*, with piety, with *derech eretz*, with *yiras Shomayim*. Do we have enough words to praise these *frum* families in Flatbush or the *chassidishe* Jews in Williamsburg or the Lubavitcher in Crown Heights?

## The Kollel Couple

Do we have enough words to praise the *kollel* man or the *kollel* wife who is sacrificing that her husband should learn Torah? The sweetest smelling people are the yeshiva men. They're young. They have no money, no power, but they are devoted to learning the Toras Hashem.

The wives too! Here you have a young idealistic girl who marries a *kollel* man. And he tells her beforehand, "I have nothing so we'll have to live in a basement in Boro Park - at the edge of Boro Park in a Spanish neighborhood. And it won't be so clean either; it's infested in those buildings. But the rent there is the cheapest I could get and I want to sit and learn."

And she says, "I'm all in - that's what I want!"

And so they move into this little den; that's all it is, a den! It's not easy for them. Everything is covered; otherwise they would find droppings in the food. Every night they put out the mouse traps and every day she sprays the baseboards with DDT. But they're living happily; they're succeeding at their goal in life - they're building a *mishkan* for the Shechinah!

Now today some people would disparage that. If the father-in-law can buy you a nice car and pay for a nice apartment, OK. It's easy to be a *kollel* man on your father-in-law's shoulders. But to live with such simplicity, with the bare minimum? Many people aren't impressed by that. But that's a big mistake. It should be our pride that our young couples forgo the pleasures of this world to live idealistic Torah lives!

## Sweet Smelling Boys

Do we have enough words to speak of the glory of the Jewish boy who walks the straight path? He



walks through the street among *goyim* as they attack him. They attack him! But he doesn't swerve from the path of virtue and he continues on to the yeshiva and he puts his soul into the words of the Torah. Do we have enough words to praise them? We fall short of praises!

The Gemara (Brachos 43b) says: עֲתִידִין בְּחוּרֵי יְשׁוּעָה לְשִׁירָא לְרִיחַ טוֹב כְּלְבָנוֹן – *There will come a time when Jewish boys will give off the fragrance of perfume in the air like the sweet smell of the pine forest!* Now, if the Gemara says that, it means that's the truth! And that's how we're expected to think right now – these are the people that smell good.

### Foul Smells

So if you ever walk into Brooklyn College, you say “I walked into a foul smelling place; wicked people dressed in ragged denim. Phew!” That's the way to speak of Brooklyn College. Not only Brooklyn College; all the colleges! They're horror houses! That's what they are. Horror houses! Filthy places of degeneracy where they encourage narcotics; they encourage the most immoral things. The teachers preach it. So when you walk out of that place your garments have to be aired! They smell bad! That's the way to speak. They deserve a bad name. You know, when you want to say somebody gave you a bad name, so in *lashon kodesh* you say *lehavisheini* – you gave me a bad odor. And so we heap on them bad odors.

But a yeshiva boy? With him you associate a pleasant fragrance, a fragrance that enhances his personality. Anybody who goes to yeshiva, anybody who spends the day learning Gemara is to us good looking and handsome and romantic. They're not learning Torah in order to make a living. They're not learning computers right now, not learning how to do any kind of profession. They're learning only for *lishmah*, nothing that'll bring them in money. And it's our job to elevate them because of that, to speak about them in ways that your listeners acquire a very great respect for the *bnei yeshiva!*

### Holy Girls

Or when you see *frum* girls on the street, praise them to whomever you're with. Don't be bashful about it. When the Beis Yaakov girls pass by, or the Beis Rochel girls or Beis Rivka girls, make it your business to be *maktir ketores*: “Ah! *Baruch Hashem! Frum, tzniusdige* girls!” We're proud of those girls; they are our glory and we shouldn't disdain the opportunity to praise them up to the sky. All decent, all well behaved; a *mechayeh* to see them. They're full of kosher idealism. They learn *mussar* in the girl's institutions. They learn *hashkafa* and they're so inspired. *Baruch Hashem!*

There's nothing in the whole world like the *frum* Jewish boys and *frum* Jewish girls. *Lehavdil*, the boys and girls from a Catholic school, they're better than in the public school, but still what kind of comparison is this? Pheh! They have different kinds of *derech erez!* Ach! Not even the slightest comparison!

### The Jewish Street

We have to talk about that and always propagandize to the world, make them understand how lucky we are we have such a youth. In the whole world there's nothing like the *frum* Jewish boys and *frum* Jewish girls. If you walk down the street in a *frum* neighborhood, all *frum* Jews living on both sides of the street, that's the safest street in America. No street in America is as safe as a street where *frum* Jews live. Without exception! There's no place in America that is just as safe as it is in a *frum* neighborhood.

And therefore we shouldn't keep quiet about it – we have to talk about that always. As much as possible you should find ways and means of propagandizing to the world about the greatness of our *frum* children.

### Middah Kineged Middah

And that's what the mitzvah of *ketores* is teaching us to do. We smell a sweet fragrance in Torah things and we have to get busy saying the truth and creating a good fragrance around anything connected to



**QUESTION**

**What did Amalek do that was so terrible that he deserved to be destroyed?**

**ANSWER**

Now, I must explain something before I answer you. We have to understand that the purpose of the ten *makkot*, the ten plagues in Egypt, were not just to punish Egypt. It says openly the purpose is **למען תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ וידעו מצרים כי אני השם** – to teach the world that I am Hashem.

Now *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* does not want miracles. That's a big principle. Because He established all the laws of nature. They're His laws and if He has to abrogate the laws of nature, it means He has to change His word. And just as He expects us to be loyal to His laws, He shows an example to us and He is loyal also to His laws of nature. And so when He does make an exception, it's for a very important reason. And the reason was to demonstrate for all time, to make a lasting impression on all the world, they should understand there's a Hashem.

Now after all this effort, when the whole world was duly impressed and everybody was afraid because they learned the fear of Hashem, all of a sudden an *az ponim*, one bold and brazen *Amalek* came up and he attacked the Jewish people. Right away. And he broke the spell.

Imagine, somebody is preaching to the people. He inspires them and everyone now is in a pious and noble mood, an inspired mood. All of a sudden, one clown in the back makes a crack and there's a joke and people laugh and the whole effect is dispelled. **ליצננות אחת דוחה מאה תוכחות**. And the *letz*, that was Amalek. He ruined it. He ruined the world. He ruined the nations. The lesson they should have learned, he came and he smashed the lesson.

That's why it says **לץ תכה** – you have to smite the *letz*, **זה עמלק**. April 1973

Hashem and His Torah. Whatever belongs to Hashem and His Torah is beautiful to us. Anything connected with our nation – of course I mean the Torah nation, the Torah practices; otherwise, even if it's the land of Israel, it could be Hebrew letters too, but if it's not Hashem's, if it's not Torah, it's not beautiful. But whatever belongs to Hashem – His mitzvos, His Torah, His ways and His people – our career in life is to make them more and more beautiful.

And because this program of making the most important things smell good is so valuable in the eyes of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, therefore the reward we'll get for fulfilling it is also valuable. Listen to what *Rabbeinu Yonah* says about this: **וְיִצְבְּחָה בְּלֹא יָגִיעַ וְיִזְכְּבוּ עַד לְשָׁמַיִם** – *Without any difficult work or labor of your hands you will merit a reward that is so great that it goes up to the heavens*. It means that if you raise the *avodas Hashem* and the *ovdei Hashem* up to the high heavens, your reward for your efforts will also be up **עַד לְשָׁמַיִם**, up to the sky; because that's how important of a career this is!

**Have A Wonderful Shabbos**

**Let's Get Practical**

**Spreading Good Propaganda**

This week I will *bli neder* make a concerted effort to speak up once every day in praise of great ideals. Whether a mitzvah, a *middah tovah*, a *tzaddik*, or a praise of the Am Yisroel, I will plan out once a day to create an opportunity for myself; to open my mouth and bring honor to Hashem by means of making the things that are important to Hashem into the sweet smelling things in this world!

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

- 247** – Beautifying the Beautiful | **845** – Praise the Righteous
- E-153** – My Son, Give Me Your Heart | **E-181** – Speak Up For the Truth | **E-187** – Tikkun Olam: Improving the World