

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Metzora - Hagadol



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Metzora - Hagadol

Shabbos HaGadol

The Tur (430) writes, "The Shabbos before Pesach is Shabbos HaGadol because a *nes gadol*, a great miracle, happened on that day. [On this final Shabbos in Mitzrayim], everyone took a sheep for the korban Pesach and tied it to their bedposts. The Mitzrim asked, 'Why are you doing this?' The Yidden replied that Hashem commanded them to slaughter the sheep as a korban Pesach. The Egyptians were distressed that the Yidden planned to slaughter their gods, but they didn't have permission to say anything. Therefore, in remembrance of this great miracle, this Shabbos is called Shabbos HaGadol."

Tosfos (*Shabbos* 87:) states that there is more to this story. The firstborns of

Mitzrayim asked the Yidden why they tied the sheep to the bedposts. The Yidden replied that they are for a korban Pesach to celebrate the deaths of firstborn Egyptians. Because on the night of Pesach, Hashem will smite all firstborn Egyptians.

The firstborn Egyptians rushed to their parents and Pharaoh and demanded that they free the Jewish nation to spare their lives. Pharaoh and their parents didn't heed their shouts.

At that point, the firstborns declared war on Mitzrayim. As it states (*Tehillim* 136:10), למכה מצרים, בבכוריהם, "To smite the Egyptians by their firstborns." Many Egyptians died in that war. This is the miracle that we celebrate on Shabbos HaGadol.¹

1. There are other reasons for the name Shabbos HaGadol.

Whichever translation of Shabbos HaGadol you prefer, Shabbos HaGadol is a day to praise Hashem for the miracles He performed for us.

Therefore, this week we will discuss the important avodah of praising Hashem. We will study how to praise Hashem, and the great salvations that come from it. We should praise Hashem for the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim and the

myriad of miracles that He performs every day.

Focus on the Good

To praise Hashem, you first have to recognize all the goodness you enjoy in life. If you do not focus on the good, you will think you have no reason to praise Hashem. Therefore, instead of thinking about how much you lack, consider all the good you possess. With this in mind,

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches that Shabbos HaGadol is a day of atonement, similar to Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is on the 10th of Tishrei, and Shabbos HaGadol in Mitzrayim was the 10th of Nisan. We call it Shabbos HaGadol, "the great Shabbos," as Yom Kippur is called *Yoma Rabba*, "the great day."

The Levush says it is called Shabbos HaGadol because this Shabbos is a preparation for the *יום ה' הגדול והנורא*, "Hashem's great and awesome day" – the day when Moshiach will come. As it states (*Malachi* 3:24), *הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליהו הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא*, "Behold I will send you Eliyahu HaNavi prior to *Hashem's great and awesome day*..."

To express the greatness of Shabbos Hagadol, the Ohev Yisrael *zt'l* (*Likutei Na'ch, Shabbos HaGadol*) writes, "The origin and the fountain of all Shabbosim of the year come from Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuvah. They are the heads of all Shabbosim of the year."

you will be able to praise Hashem.

Of course, this is easier said than done because people tend to take all the good they enjoy in life for granted. They think that it couldn't be otherwise and don't feel compelled to thank and praise Hashem for all the good He bestows upon them.

There was a gadol in Yerushalayim who wanted to help parents recognize the goodness in their lives, so when someone came and told him, "I get a mazal tov! My wife just had a baby," he would respond, "That's wonderful news. How many fingers does the baby have?"

"Ten."

"Ten? Baruch Hashem! Mazal tov! Mazal tov! You should have much nachas!"

He would mention the ten fingers to remind the parent that he should thank Hashem for that, as well.

Once, a baby was just born, and the parents watched in horror as the doctor painstakingly examined each of the newborn child's fingers.

"Doctor, is something wrong?" they asked.

"Everything is fine," the doctor replied. "It is just that as a doctor, I must check the child's health and report it in writing. Part of my job is to count and make sure that the child has all ten fingers. So I was looking at the fingers and counting them."

Yes, we must be thankful for that too, and for the billions of other miracles Hashem does for us each day.

Reb Shlomo Brevda zt'l was walking down the stairway from his second-floor apartment and slipped. He could have fallen all the way to the street below, but with Hashem's help, he grabbed onto the handrail. He

considered this a miracle and was sure that he would never be the same person anymore. His Torah, his tefillah, and everything he does would be different.

But soon enough, he forgot about the salvation and went back to serving Hashem as he had before. He went to the Chazon Ish zt'l to ask him why this occurred.

The Chazon Ish replied, "Do you think miracles happen only to you? Everyone experiences miracles. That's why we say in Modim על ניסוך שבכל יום עמנו, '[We praise You] for the miracles You perform for us each and every day.' But there is a yetzer hara that is appointed specifically to cause people to forget.² That's what happened to you. You forgot the miracle. A person's avodah is to

remember the good chasadim that Hakadosh Baruch Hu does with him, all the time."

I heard about an eighty-seven-year-old man who was hospitalized and was placed on a respirator. Two weeks later, when he recovered, the hospital personnel told him, "Your condition became critical, and we were in an emergency, so we put you on a respirator. But now that you are well enough to be off the machine, you will need to pay for it. It will be ten thousand dollars..."

The old man began to cry.

"O.K., we'll give you a deduction."

He cried some more.

"You know what, we'll charge you half because we

2. The Or HaChaim (Devarim, 8:18) writes, "The yetzer hara's ploy is to cause a person to forget Hashem's kindness, and that is how he destroys the person."

see that it is so hard for you to pay for it."

He replied, "I wasn't crying over the cost. I was crying because when I heard that to breathe for two weeks the cost is ten thousand dollars, I realized how thankful I should be to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who enables me to breathe all the time. And Hashem gives it to me for free and without any pain. How thankful I should be to Hashem!"

This story reminds us of the following Gemara (Bava Metzia 86.):

On a sweltering day, Reb Shimon ben Chalafta sat on the top of a mountain and asked his daughter to wave a fan for him. He told her that he would pay her with a package of besamim. And then the wind blew, and Reb Shimon ben Chalafta was relieved. He

said, "How many packages of besamim do I owe to the Creator of these winds!"

The Toras Chaim (Bava Kama 16.) writes, "Hashem does kindness with every person every day and every moment. Mankind does not recognize the miracles that happen to them.³ They perceive the world and all that occurs in it as a result of nature. They don't appreciate that their every step, movement, and breath are from Hashem Yisbarach. It would be proper for a person to praise Hashem every moment, as Chazal say *כל הנשמה תהלל י"ה*, we should praise Hashem for each breath. But it is impossible to do so. Therefore, Anshei Kneses HaGedolah instituted to recite Modim three times each day. When we say this prayer of gratitude, we should praise Hashem for everything. When we say

3. The Gemara (Nidah 31.) says, *אין בעל הנס מוכיר בניסו*, the person who experiences a miracle doesn't recognize it.

על נשמותנו הפקודות לך, we thank Hashem for each נשימה, each breath. Chazal instituted that one should bow during Modim, in the manner that people bow to one another when they express their gratitude. Chazal say that if one doesn't bow during Modim, his spine will become a snake in his grave. This is because he didn't bow by Modim to praise Hashem for His kindness, which means he doesn't believe in Hashem's kindness. The Midrash says that the snake (who came to entice Chavah) stood upright (קומה זקופה). It didn't bow in gratitude to Hashem. When one doesn't bow by Modim, he resembles the snake, who didn't recognize Hashem's kindness.¹⁴

Bitul b'Rov

Someone sent a letter to Reb Matisyahu Luria zt'l, in which he complained about all the hardships he was going through. Reb Matisyahu replied, "If a person would put everything that he should be thankful for on one side of a scale, and on the other side, his frustrations and pain, the good will far outweigh the bad. He will laugh at himself for making an issue over his troubles, since there is so much blessing in his life."

Reb Matisyahu Luria explained the pasuk (Tehillim 150:2) הלהו ברוב גדלו, the word רוב is like ביטול ברוב (annulled in the majority), and גדלו refers to Hashem's

4. The Kav HaYashar (ch.18) writes, "There isn't a person who doesn't experience miracles. Especially in these generations when there are so many tzaros. There are evil decrees, frightening wars, hunger, captivity, and many kinds of illnesses. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu showered His kindness on you and saved you from all the above, you must always remember Hashem's kindness. You can't be a kafuy tovah."

kindness. The pasuk is saying: Recognize all the good in your life, and the bad will become batel b'rov. With this thought in mind, הללו, you will be able to praise Hashem.

The parashah (5:1-13) discusses the following three scenarios:

(1) Someone asks his friend to testify on his behalf in beis din, and the friend swears falsely that he didn't witness the episode in question.

(2) Someone forgot that he was tamei and entered the beis hamikdash or ate kodshim.

(3) Someone swore to do something good or bad to himself and didn't keep his promise.

For these aveiros, he must bring a unique korban called קרבן עולה ויורד, a korban up and down, which is a korban that is dependent on the offeror's financial abilities.

The wealthy bring a sheep or a goat as a korban chatas.

A poor person brings two birds: one for an olah and one for a chatas.

Extremely poor people bring a korban minchah (meal offering) as a korban chatas.

The Ibn Ezra (Vayikra 5:7) asks about the second category when one brings two birds, an olah and a chatas. He asks, why must he bring a korban olah? The wealthy person doesn't bring a korban olah; only a chatas, so why is the poor man required to bring an olah? Why doesn't he bring one bird only, as a korban chatas?

In the name of Rav Yitzchak (one of the Rishonim), the Ibn Ezra writes, כי טעם אחד עולה בעבור שלא תגיע ידו אולי עולה על רוחו מחשבה, "The reason he brings an olah is because he didn't have money to buy an animal for a korban, and perhaps he had a

thought [of a complaint against Hashem]."

The Ibn Ezra has another explanation,⁵ but the explanation from Rav Yitzchak contains a wonderful lesson.

The poor person might have complained against Hashem because he is so poor, and he couldn't even afford to buy a goat or a sheep for his korban. He might think, "Why am I poor and others are

wealthy?" To rectify that improper thought, he must bring a korban olah.⁶

The poor man needs atonement because he has complaints about Hashem, r'l, a terrible aveirah. He doesn't believe everything is for the good. He can rectify his aveirah by focusing on all the good he receives until the bad is batel b'rov. He will see all the good and not pay attention to the bad.⁷

5. The Ibn Ezra explains that when one offers a korban chatas of cattle, parts of the animal are burnt on the mizbeiach. This doesn't happen with a bird chatas, which is eaten by the kohanim. Therefore, he must bring along with it a korban olah, so he can place something on the mizbeiach.

6. This lesson is based on the Yerushalmi (Yoma 8:7) that says, "The korban olah atones for thoughts. As it states (Yechezkel 20:32) העולה והשכים בבקר והעלה עלות מספר כולם [which can be translated as] על רוחכם תהיה, the korban olah will atone for your thoughts, and it states (Iyov 1) כי אמר איוב אולי חטאו בני וברכו אלקים בלבכם, "In the morning, Iyov sacrificed olahs, as many as the number of his children, because Iyov said, 'Perhaps my children sinned and they cursed Hashem with their thoughts.'" So we see that the korban olah atones for bad thoughts.

7. Chazal tell us that a person isn't punished for bad thoughts. מוחשבה רעה אין הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה. The exception is avodah zarah, for which one is punished for the bad thoughts, too. We can explain that this poor person needs an atonement for his bad thoughts

There is a story I know from reliable sources. It happened about fifteen years ago, but it is becoming renowned in recent times, as the person to who the story occurred is now willing to discuss it.

As a chasidic bachur living in Eretz Yisrael, this bachur had a very difficult teenage life and fell to very low levels. No one knows exactly, but it is likely that he wasn't even putting on tefillin at that time. Nevertheless, Hashem helped him, and he got engaged to a very good girl (her family background made it hard for her to find a shidduch, and people suggested this bachur for her.)

When she was seven months pregnant with her first child, she told her husband that she wasn't feeling good. She got out of

bed and was niftar on his arms.

The young man was devastated. His life had finally begun taking on shape and form, and now this tragedy befell him. He didn't know how to handle it.

Not long afterwards, his friends were going to hear a drashah from Reb Tzvi Meir Zilberberg, Shlita, and he came along with them. He was half sitting and half lying on a bench, totally depressed. The drashah hadn't yet begun, so he picked up a sefer from the table and started reading from it. He read that when a person goes through hard times, he should focus on the good in his life, and that will enable him to be happy.

This was precisely the advice he needed at that

because his complaints are similar to avodah zarah. He doesn't believe that everything is for the best and there is no reason to complain.

moment. He went home and danced. He began focusing on the things he could be happy about in his life. He remarried, and now he has a growing family, and his spiritual level has risen immensely.

Because when you focus on the good, you can be happy, no matter how bitter your lot is.

Wake-Up Calls

Ironically, tragedies help people praise Hashem because then they realize that nothing can be taken for granted and they start noticing all the good they have.

There is a person who was in an accident, and both his feet were shattered.

As he lay in the hospital for two months, his discussions were primarily praises to Hashem. He focused on how much he enjoys seeing, hearing, tasting food, etc. He praised Hashem for things that he

had taken for granted his entire life. He found joy in "trivial things" that most people ignore.

Chazal (Brachos 54:) discuss the four categories of people obligated to praise Hashem. They are (1) those who cross a sea, (2) those who traverse a desert, (3) people freed from jail, and (4) those healed from a dangerous illness.

These people were in a dangerous situation, and Hashem saved them.

The Alshich HaKadosh (Vayikra 7:11-16) explains that *everyone* must praise Hashem, not only these four categories of people. But sometimes, people have to go through life-threatening situations, r'l, to learn to recognize Hashem's kindness in all areas of their lives.

Dovid Hamelech (Tehillim 107:43) discusses the four categories of people who must praise Hashem and concludes, ׀

חכם וישמר אלה ויתבוננו חסדי ה'
 "Whoever is wise let him
 note these things, and they
 will comprehend the
 kindness of Hashem." The
 wise recognize Hashem's
 kindness beforehand (before
 they endure hardships) so they
 won't need to endure these
 dangerous situations to
 realize how much they
 must praise Hashem.

Praise Hashem and You Will Receive More

When you praise your
 benefactor, you give him
 an incentive to continue
 being kind to you. But
 when you don't praise the
 giver, he likely won't want
 to continue helping you.

This is one of the reasons
 it is important to praise
 Hashem. You show
 Hashem that you appreciate
 what you received and
 keviyachol, that inspires
 Hashem to continue
 bestowing kindness upon
 you.

Reb Akiva Eiger zt'l (end
 of Teshuvos Chadashos) writes

that "praising Hashem is
 for our benefit because
 when one receives kindness
 from another, and he
 doesn't express his
 gratitude, he can't expect
 to receive this goodness
 again. He demonstrated
 that he doesn't consider the
 favor significant. But if he
 shows appreciation and
 thanks the one who helped
 him, his benefactor will
 continue helping him.
 Chazal say (Brachos, beginning
 of ch.6), 'Whoever enjoys
 the pleasures of this world
 and doesn't say a brachah
 is like he stole from the
 Jewish nation.' This is
 because Hakadosh Baruch
 Hu sends rain to bring
 forth bread and food,
 which grant us life. We
 must show our appreciation
 to Hashem by praising
 Him before we enjoy the
 food. By doing so, Hashem
 will bless the produce so
 we can receive even more.
 Therefore, Hashem says
 (Tehillim 50:23) זובה תודה, a
 korban todah is brought
 when one is saved from a
 tzarah, and he brings a

todah to thank Hashem. The pasuk says that for expressing your gratitude, אראנו בישע אלקים, I will show you more salvations in the future."

The Rizhiner zt'l once heard his daughter moaning. So he told her, "It isn't good to moan because then Heaven will say, 'You

think your situation is bad? We will show you what bad is, c"v!"

"In contrast, when you thank Hashem for the good, Heaven says, 'You think this is good? We will show you what good is!' and you will receive much more kindness from Above."⁸

8. A husband came home and saw that supper wasn't ready and the dishes from yesterday's supper were still in the sink. "What did you do all day?" he demanded from his wife.

She remained silent.

The next day it was the same. He asked her, "What did you do all day?" She didn't respond.

The following day was far worse. The house was turned over, the children were fighting with each other, and one of them was scribbling on the wall. The man entered the house and found his wife in bed, reading a book. "What did you do all day?" he asked in wonder.

"Today, I did nothing," she replied.

In this manner, she showed him how much she does every day, things that he takes for granted.

This story is a lesson in shalom bayis. A husband should recognize and appreciate everything that his wife does for him, things that he doesn't generally notice and appreciate.

The story is also a reminder that we have to focus on all the kindness Hashem does for us. We shouldn't harbor complaints

Praising Hashem Results in Salvation

The Tur (Orach Chaim 579) lists the chapters of Tehillim one is recommended to say on fast days that were established for an *eis tzarah* (when the nation or the community is in danger, r'l). One of the chapters is (Tehillim 136:1) הודו לה' כי טוב כי "Give thanks to Hashem for He is good, for His kindness endures forever." This chapter is called הלל הגדול. It states twenty-six times כי לעולם חסדו, "His kindness endures forever." Why should we recite this chapter of praise during an *eis tzarah*?

I heard that it is because we praise Hashem for the miracles that *will* occur. We thank Hashem now for the coming miracles, which bring on the miracles.

It states ויאמר ה' אל משה מה תצעק אלי... הרם את מטך ונטה את ירך Hashem said to Moshe, "Why are you praying to Me?... Raise your staff and stretch out your arm over the sea."

The Mechilta (Bishalach 3) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, "Moshe! My children are in a tzarah. The sea is before them, and an enemy pursues them from behind, and you are standing here and davening?"

"Moshe asked, 'What should I do?'

"Hashem replied, 'Raise your staff and stretch it out over the sea and praise and sing songs of gratitude to the One Who wages war.'

We understand from this Midrash that praising Hashem saved the Jewish nation when tefillos couldn't. The sea split

against Hashem because we don't want to discover how terrible things can get if chas v'shalom Hashem stops doing all the kindness He performs for us.

before Bnei Yisrael because Moshe praised Hashem for the miracles that *will be*.

The Noam Elimelech (Likutei Shoshanah, ד"ה פדות שלח, לעמו) writes:

"Hashem always prepares the cure before He smites (מקדים רפואה למכה). What is the cure which Hashem prepares? It is to praise Hashem's great name... As we say in davening: בורא רפאות, Hashem prepares the cure, נורא תהילות, with our praises." Because when we praise Hashem for the upcoming salvations, we will merit experiencing them.

The Meor Einayim (Tzav) writes, "The Yidden in Mitzrayim conducted the entire Pesach Seder exactly as we make our Seders today. They told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* because they trusted that Hashem would certainly take them out of Mitzrayim. This drew down Hashem's kindness, and they were redeemed."

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah 4:12) says that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 52:11) אודך לעולם כי עשית, "I will praise You forever" and ואקוה שמך כי טוב "I trust that You will do chesed for me," in the merit of my praises.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes that it is also alluded to in the following words (Tehillim 116:3-4) צרה ויגון אמצא, ובשם ה' אקרא, "Distress and grief I will find, and I will praise Hashem's name." (116:13) כוס ישועות אשא "I will raise the cup of salvation." Praising Hashem during difficult times is what brought about the salvation.

The Kaf HaChaim (281:8) writes in the name of the Chesed l'Avraham, who received the kabbalah from Reb Yehudah HaChosid that "When one has a tzarah, he should make a kabbalah that when he has his salvation, he will say Nishmas with joy and song together with ten people, and he will have a salvation.

Many tried this and succeeded."

I heard from a Yid from Antwerp who waited many years to have children. His wife heard about this segulah, and promised that she will make a seudas hoda'ah with nishmas in front of ten people when she has her salvation, and she indeed merited to bear children.

The Chesed l'Avraham (Reb Avraham Azulay, grandfather of the Chida) was traveling from Eretz Yisrael to chutz l'aretz to collect money for the poor of Eretz Yisrael. When they were in the middle of the sea, stormy weather set in, and the ship was on the verge of sinking. Reb Avraham made a kabalah that if the sea calms down, he will praise Hashem every day and tell people about the miracle that happened to him. Immediately, the sea settled down.

After this story, he changed his signature to a

picture of a ship to praise Hashem and to publicize the miracle that happened to him.

A girl living in New York was suffering from excess mucus and phlegm in her airway to the extent that she was having difficulty breathing. She went to many experts, but they all said they had never seen anything like it before and didn't know what was causing the problem. The only advice they received was that the girl should go to Arizona, where the air is arid and dry. She was there for three weeks, but it didn't help much. The girl with her family returned home, feeling frustrated and helpless.

At that time, the girl made a kabalah that every night, before going to sleep, she would write in a diary ten good things that happened to her that day; and thank Hashem for these favors.

On the forty-first day of this good custom, she added a special notation in her diary. She wrote, "I am breathing well and without pain. It is like I was never ill." She had her salvation from praising Hashem. (I heard this story from the girl's father.)

I heard from a talmid chacham that had lost his hearing r'l, and the doctors didn't have a cure for him. He began thinking about all the kindnesses Hashem performs for him each day. Although he could not hear, all his other limbs functioned well, and he praised Hashem for that. He also praised Hashem for giving him a healthy family and so on.

Sometime later, he went to another doctor who prescribed him a new medication. In a short time, his hearing returned, almost like before.

Concealing Requests in Praise

The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev-Teves 4:139) writes that when a person davens, his deeds are examined to see whether he deserves that his requests be granted. However, when one praises Hashem, his praises can't be stopped. Hashem wants to listen to these praises. Therefore, the wise pray to Hashem by praising Him. These tefillos will undoubtedly go up to heaven and will be answered.

The way to do this is to say words of praise with the intention of tefillah. For example, in the second brachah of Shemonah Esrei, when you say רופא חולים and praise Hashem for healing the ill, you can think, "Hashem, there is someone ill in my family. Please heal him." And when you say מכלכל חיים בחסד, that Hashem sustains the entire world with His kindness, you can pray in your heart that Hashem should grant you

parnassah. Your words of praise will certainly go up to Hashem, and together with them will go your heart's requests.

The Bnei Yissaschar writes that he learned this lesson from his teachers on the pasuk (Tehillim 18:4) *מְהוֹלָל אֶקְרָא ה' וּמִן אוֹיְבֵי אוֹשָׁע*, "From within the praises, I pray to Hashem, and I will be saved from my enemies."

The Bnei Yissaschar adds that this is also the meaning of the pasuk (Tehillim 118:21) *אֹדֶד כִּי עֲנִיתִי וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה*, I praise you Hashem, כי עניתני, when I had affliction, and immediately *וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה*, I had a yeshuah.

Reb Chaim Shaul Kaufman zt'l related a story of a moser (informer) who made the lives of the Jewish community bitter with his slander. Everyone hated him, but they were also afraid of him, and they didn't dare try to do anything to him. Nevertheless, the children of the city would tease the

moser when they saw him. They would chant after him, "Haman HaRasha! Haman HaRasha!"

The moser went to the poritz of the city and complained that people were calling him Haman Harasha. So the poritz made a rule that whoever calls another person by this name he will be punished with a thousand ruble fine.

The children didn't give up. They began calling him Ben Hamdasa (Haman's father's name). The moser complained again, and the poritz ruled that whoever calls his fellow man Ben Hamdasa must pay two thousand rubles.

The children realized that they couldn't call the moser Haman or Ben Hamdasa, so they began calling him *קַדְמָא וְאַזְלָא* because the first time Haman ben Hamdasa is written in the megillah, the tune is Kadma v'Azla.

At first, the moser didn't know what they were saying. But eventually, he understood the children's intention and complained to the poritz that the children were teasing him again and that they were calling him Kadma v'Azla. The poritz exclaimed, "That is a terrible crime. One mustn't verbally abuse his fellow man. I decree that whoever calls his fellow man Kadma v'Azla will be fined three thousand rubles."

Children don't give up so easily. When they saw the moser, they sang the tune of Kadma v'Azla. They didn't say any words. They just sang the tune.

The moser complained yet a fourth time. "They are singing the tune of Kadma v'Azla repeatedly whenever they see me."

"Do they say any words?" the poritz asked.

"No. Just the tune."

"It is a crime to harm one's fellow man with words, but there is nothing wrong with singing a tune. So, this time I can't help you."

This teaches us the benefit of praising Hashem. Sometimes, we are unworthy of our requests going up before Hashem, but who can stop us from singing Hashem's praises? Hashem will listen to the praises, understand the underlying requests, and grant us our wishes.

Your Fellow Man Comes First

It states in *Pirkei Avos* (5:20) "Reb Yehudah ben Teima says, 'Be brazen like a leopard, swift like an eagle, run like a deer, and strong like a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven.'"

An eagle is swifter than a deer. So, after stating that one should be swift like an eagle, why does the Mishnah mention that we

should run like a deer? We should be even quicker than a deer because we should be swift like an eagle!

Also, where in *Tanach* do we find that a deer runs quickly, that the *Mishnah* uses it as an example?

Reb Shimon Sofer zt'l replies that the *Mishnah* is based on the final pasuk of *Shir HaShirim*, which states, וְדַמָּה לֶךְ לְצַבִּי, "Be like a deer..." The *Midrash* explains that when a deer runs, it keeps turning its head to look back. It is this attribute of the deer that the *Mishnah* refers to.

Reb Shimon Sofer zt'l explains that the *Mishna* (5:20) teaches us two important lessons: Be swift in *avodas Hashem* like an eagle, but also be like the deer who always looks back to understand the needs of others. Some people excel in *ben adam l'makom*, but they forget that a primary aspect of serving Hashem is to

perform good deeds *ben adam l'chaveiro*. Your desire to serve Hashem shouldn't cause you to lose sight of the needs of your fellow man.

The *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 15:) states, "If your rebbe is like a malach, ask him to teach you Torah. Otherwise, don't learn Torah from him."

But how should we know if our teacher is like a malach if we never saw a malach before?

One thing we know about malachim is that they are עומדים because they stay at the same spot. They do not rise from level to level.

We should choose a rebbe who is prepared to be an עומד, to stand at the same place. He must be a person who is ready to jeopardize his own growth, if necessary, to help and teach others.

Someone once told Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l, "I

have many students, and each year, my alumni increase. My students keep returning to ask me questions, and although I want to help them, I am left with hardly time for my own studies."

Reb Chaim replied, "Speaking with bachurim after the shiur is part of studying and teaching Torah."

The man explained to Reb Chaim that the conversations weren't always about Torah. More often, the topics are about their lives, shidduchim, their struggles, and the like.

Reb Chaim replied, "To speak with them about these matters is also a great mitzvah."

The man said, "But when will I study Torah?"

Reb Chaim replied, "Try to learn a little."

This talented rebbe was flabbergasted. He knew

that nothing was more important to Reb Chaim than Torah study. Nevertheless, he advised him to be there for his students, to be an עומד.

Hashem gives each individual a different role, and everyone must fulfill the role Hashem planned for him. Hashem wanted this man to devote himself to his students' needs.

This is to be an עומד, prepared to remain at the same level to help the growth of others. And this is the type of teacher one should seek to have.

One year, the Tiferes Shlomo zt'l of Radomsk came to the Rebbe of Radishitz zt'l for Shavuos.

The Rebbe of Radishitz asked him, "You have your own chasidim who need you and want you to stay with them. Why did you come here?"

The Tiferes Shlomo explained that he also wants to grow in avodas

Hashem. Although he became a Rebbe and had followers, that doesn't mean that he doesn't need to grow and learn from his rebbe.

The Rebbe of Radshitz told him that it states (Shemos 19:14) וירד משה מן ההר אל העם "Moshe descended from the mountain to the people." Rashi explains that Moshe went directly from Har Sinai to the nation to prepare them for matan Torah. "He didn't first take care of his own business."

The Radshitzer asked, "What business did Moshe have? His business was to prepare *himself* for *matan Torah*. Moshe wanted to prepare himself for this great moment. Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu abandoned his personal needs to serve the Jewish nation."

This is the ideal rebbe: Someone who is prepared

to sacrifice his growth for the sake of others.

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* taught that just as we have a mitzvah to give one-tenth of our money to the poor, we should also give a tenth of the time we study Torah to study with people who are weaker than us in their Torah knowledge.⁹

After the Holocaust, a survivor *bachur* came to a yeshiva in London to learn Torah. He was the weakest student in the school because he had missed many years of Torah study during the War. Most students didn't have the patience to learn with him, but two *bachurim* spent time with him every day to teach him Torah. They were Reb Moshe Shternbuch *shlita*, the Raavad of Yerushalayim, and Reb Tuvia Weiss *shlita*, the Gaavad of

9. The Bnei Yissaschar teaches that the greatest form of *tzedakah* is to teach Torah to someone poor in knowledge.

Yerushalayim. They were prepared to sacrifice their growth to help others.¹⁰

When a question regarding kashrus came before Reb Moshe Klirs *zt'l* (the Rav of Teveria), he didn't take the easy path and say

it was forbidden. Instead, he tried to find a way to rule it was kosher. He explained that he learned this approach from the Shevet Mussar, who expressed that if you are machmir on a poor person and rule that his food is

10. In a letter, the Chazon Ish *zt'l* writes that ultimately one gains from learning with weaker students. As Chazal (*Taanis* 7.) say, "I learned a lot from my teachers, and even more from my friends, and מתלמידי יותר מכולם, I learned the most from my students."

The Gemara compares this to splinters of wood that ignite large logs. Similarly, Torah scholars become wise in Torah from their students. The students ask questions which sharpens the depth and perception of the teacher.

Reb Chaim Kreisworth *zt'l* told the following story:

"I once presided over a *din Torah* where the claim was for a thousandth of a percent. The broker said he was supposed to receive .005% for each sale he makes, and the merchant said he only agreed to give .004%."

The crowd began to laugh. They thought it was humorous that people should squabble over such trivial amounts.

"Don't laugh," Reb Chaim told them. "This *din Torah* is between a diamond merchant and his broker. The agent made a billion dollars' worth of sales. The .001% difference is ten thousand dollars. Not a small amount of money."

Reb Chaim concluded, "Sometimes people think their Torah isn't worth much because they aren't learning entirely *lishmah*. But due to the eternal value of Torah, even if only a tiny percentage of the reward remains, it is still worth millions."

unkosher when you could have ruled leniently, you are causing a poor person to lose money. That is an aveirah between man and his fellow (*bein adam lechaveiro*) for which Yom Kippur doesn't atone.¹¹

What does this teach us? It is a reminder that our devotion to Hashem shouldn't interfere with our dedication to helping others. Obviously, we can't be lenient with kashrus when the halachah is to be machmir, but then again, we shouldn't be swift to make a halachic decision that something isn't kosher. Just as eating non-kosher is

a severe aveirah, causing another person financial loss is a severe aveirah, too.

We can learn the importance *bein adam lechaveiro* from a custom found by *Kiddush Levanah*.

Kiddush Levanah is a very holy mitzvah. It is like welcoming the *Shechinah*.¹² Furthermore, it offers protection. The *magid* (angel) told the Beis Yosef, "After one says *Kiddush Levanah*, he will surely live out that month."

The Shaarei Teshuvah tells that a band of thieves and murderers captured a Yid, and he requested that

11. Once, the Shevet Mussar awoke in the middle of the night and wanted to study Torah and daven, but he needed a belt. It was dark. He bent down and picked up what he thought was a belt and wrapped himself in it. In the morning, he saw that he had wrapped himself with a snake. In memory of this miracle, he named one of his sefarim *Eizur Eliyahu* (the belt of Eliyahu).

12. As we say, אלמלי לא זכו ישראל להקביל פני אביהם שבשמים פעם אחת בחדש דים, אמר אב"י הלכך צריך למימרא מעמד "If the Jewish nation were only able to meet their Father in heaven once a month, it would also be sufficient. Abaya said, therefore one must say *Kiddush Levanah* standing."

he be allowed to say *Kiddush Levanah*. The thieves granted his final wish. As he jumped three times in the tefillah of *Kiddush Levanah* (as is the custom), a strong wind lifted him and sent him far away from the bandits. This is how his life was saved.

However, even in the middle saying this special prayer, if someone greets you and says *shalom aleichem*, you must answer him. Say *aleichem shalom* three times (as is part of the *nusach*).

This hints that one must have in mind others, even at the most exalted moments of welcoming the *Shechinah*.

One of the highest points of the day is when we read *kriyas Shema*.

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 55:1) writes, "The time

to read *Shema* in the morning is when one sees his friend from a distance of four cubits and recognizes him." A lesson is hinted here. Even as you read the *Shema*, be able to see your fellow man. Don't turn the highest moments of devotion into a situation where you forget the needs of the people around you.

Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Bardichev zt'l said that the אה"ה of the *Shema* means א"ה דל"ת, the brother of the poor. You should consider your destitute fellow man as if he is your brother, and you should be devoted to helping him as you would be committed to helping your brother.

Once again, we see that at the highest moments of devotion to Hashem, when we read the *Shema*, we should be simultaneously devoted to helping our fellow man in need.¹³

13. The *Shema* is related to the seder. We say in the Haggadah: מעשה בר' אליעזר ור' יהושע ור' אלעזר בן עזריה ור' עקיבא ור' טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני ברק...עד

The children of Reb Binyamin Rabinowitz *zt'l* (dayan of the Eidah HaChareidis, Yerushalayim) were serving the Shulchan Aruch meal hastily. They explained that it was only twenty minutes to *chatzos*. (Reb Binyamin was careful to eat the afikomom before chatzos – see *Shulchan Aruch* 477).

Reb Binyamin *zt'l* instructed them not to rush through the meal. He explained, "The *rebbetzin* worked hard to prepare the meal, and she will be disappointed if we won't enjoy it. All the *chumros* of the Seder aren't worthwhile if they cause a *krechitz* from another Yid."

"Reb Eliezer, Reb Yehoshua, Reb Elazar ben Azaryah, Reb Akiva, and Reb Tarfon were reclining [at the Seder] in Bnei Brak...until their students came and said, 'Our teachers, the time to read Shema of Shacharis, of the morning, has arrived'"

(1) שאינו יודע לשאול (2) חכם is *roshei teivos* of the four children: שחרית"ת. (3) On the Seder night we seek to instill in our children the awareness that אהד. (4) רשע תם.

The Bnei Yissaschar *zt'l* once passed the home of a simple person on the Seder night and heard the *baal habayis* read the Haggadah: כנגד ארבע בנים דברה תורה אהד חכם, ואהד רשע, ואהד תם... This simpleton pronounced אהד long and forcefully, in the manner people say אהד in *kriyas Shema*.

The Bnei Yissaschar knocked at his door and asked the *baal habayis* why he said אהד that way.

The man replied, "My father told me that one should stretch the word אהד when saying Shema. Why should אהד in the Haggadah be different?"

The Bnei Yissaschar turned to the chassidim who were with him and said, "This Yid took the four children of the Haggadah and made them into *kriyas Shema*." Because our goal is to take children of all levels and to increase their awareness of אהד.

Someone asked Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* if he may eat machine matzos on Pesach, because his family would be insulted if he didn't.

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "In heaven they will not ask you whether you ate hand matzah or machine matzah. They will ask you only two questions: Did you guard your eyes, and did you guard your mouth from causing pain to another Yid?"

Once, in the home of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil a guest was eating gebroks. Rebbe Shlomo's family wanted to stop him, but Rebbe Shlomke stopped them, motioning to them not to tell the guest anything.

Afterwards, he repeated the above lesson to his children, "In heaven, you won't be asked whether you ate gebroks or not. Instead, you will be asked whether you guarded your eyes and whether you

guarded your mouth against harming another Yid."

Anger

As the family celebrated the seder, a young grandchild of Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna *zt'l* was roaming around the house and came across the closet where the items sold for Pesach were stored. The child took out a beer bottle and brought it into the dining room. The family was appalled. "Chametz in Pesach... At the seder!"

The only one who remained calm was the Rebbe. He told the young child to put down the bottle, and the Rebbe covered it with a pot. As halachah states (Pesachim 6), "If one finds chametz on Pesach, he should cover it with a utensil," Then, he put a small tablecloth over the pot in honor of Yom Tov.

He turned to the stunned grandson and told him,

"Thank you so much! You enabled us to keep a halachah in Shulchan Aruch. How often does one have the opportunity to keep this halachah? This halachah wasn't given to Goyim; it was written for Yidden, and you helped us keep it."

Others may have responded with anger, but what would anger accomplish? Would it increase love for the Yom Tov? Would it build the child's self-esteem and his interest in Yiddishkeit? Instead, Rebbe Yochanan demonstrated the joy in keeping halachah and the joy of Yiddishkeit.

The wicked son asks (Shemos 12:26): "What is this work for you." He considers the seder (and Torah and mitzvos) a burden, work, something he doesn't want to do.

But why does he have that impression of Yiddishkeit at the Seder night? We could understand the rasha asking this question on Yom Kippur because he doesn't want to fast, or if he asked his question on Tisha b'Av, when we fast and mourn and sit on the ground. But Pesach is a happy time! We eat a good meal together with the family; we recline and feel free and wealthy. Why should the rasha be upset with this ceremony?

It seems the rasha is thinking about all the nervousness, shouting and screaming that occurred erev Pesach, during the days the house was being cleaned for Pesach. He witnessed the hysteria and tension in the days leading up to Pesach, so he asks, "Why do you need it for?"¹⁴

14. There was a youngster who told his rav, "I was analyzing the way women clean for Pesach, and I came to the conclusion that

Reb Nota Zehnoworth with calling for a *יום תפילה*, a
zt'l once announced in beis day of fasting and davening.
 medresh, "When there's an I think we should do the
 עת צרה, klal Yisrael responds same, now."

they don't clean well enough. They clean the floors by pouring water over the floors, but what about all the crevices!? Chametz can get caught there and pouring water won't take it out. So I instructed my wife to clean the floor with a toothpick, in order to get out all the chametz stuck in the cracks but she isn't interested in taking on this chumrah. She said that only if the rav agrees that it is important to clean the floors with a toothpick, she will do so."

The rav replied, "I agree that it is important. In fact, it is so important that you should do it yourself. Do not rely on your wife or anyone else to clean the floors."

The lesson: Husbands shouldn't make things hard for their wives. And if they feel something should be done, and their spouse doesn't want to, they can do it themselves.

There is an old translation, in Yiddish, for each of the 15 simanim of the Seder, which is customarily recited at the Seder.

People who attended the Chebiner Rav's Seder tell that the Chebiner Rav would translate the simanim *קדש ורחץ כרפס* etc. into Yiddish, as customary, but when he said *שולחן ערוך*, he didn't say the Yiddish translation, which is, *מען גרייט צו די טיש מצה מיט פיש און אלע*, "We prepare the table with matzah, fish, and all good foods."

One year, after the Seder, someone asked him why he didn't say the traditional Yiddish phrase. He replied, "When I said *קדש*, the Yiddish translation tells me that I should make kiddush. When I said *ורחץ* the Yiddish phrase tells me to wash my hands. But when I said *שולחן ערוך*, I was telling the women to set the table and to serve good foods. When you are speaking to others, it isn't proper to repeat it. I said it once, respectfully and calmly, *שולחן ערוך*, and that's all."

No one knew what he meant. They asked, "What *tzarah* are you referring to? Is there a problem?"

With a smile, he explained that with Pesach approaching, people become anxious and worried. They feel like it is

עת צרה. So, we should make a *יום תפילה*, a day for fasting and *teshuva*.¹⁵

The lesson is that every aspect of Yiddishkeit should be performed with joy and calmness, Pesach cleaning, too¹⁶.

15. The Chebiner Rav's second Rebbetzin was a granddaughter of the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*. To honor her, the Chebiner Rav would tell her a *dvar Torah* from the Chasam Sofer every day or he would tell her a story about the Chasam Sofer's ways.

The Chasam Sofer used to eat kneidlach at the Seder. One year, Reb Shmuel Binyamin Schiffer from Vienna was at the Seder of the Chebiner Rav *zt'l* and asked the Rav why he doesn't eat kneidlach at the Seder. His question implied, "You speak about the Chasam Sofer every day, to honor your wife, and you try to follow the Chasam Sofer's ways. So why don't you honor her with eating kneidlach at the Seder, as the Chasam Sofer did?"

The Chebiner Rav replied, "You are correct that we should follow in the ways of *tzaddikim*. Therefore, we must learn their *divrei Torah* and emulate their holy ways. But we don't have to begin with the kneidlach."

16. Rosh Hashanah, we blow the *תקיעות דמושב ותקיעת דמעומד*. This means we blow shofar before the *mussaf Shemonah Esrei* and then again during the *mussaf tefillah*. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16.) says that we blow these two times, in order to confuse the Satan.

Tosfos quotes a Yerushalmi, which explains how blowing the shofar confuses the Satan:

"When the Satan hears the first blast from the shofar, he is

somewhat afraid but not very afraid (בהיל ולא בהיל). When he hears the shofar again, the Satan says, 'This is certainly the great shofar of Moshiach. I am going to be destroyed.' He becomes confused, and he is unable to speak *kitrug* (slander) on the Jewish people."

The Bardichover Rav *zt'l* says cleaning for Pesach creates similar malachim as are created by blowing the shofar. Therefore, we can say that when women clean their homes for Pesach, the Satan becomes afraid, but he isn't totally afraid (בהיל ולא בהיל). But then a child comes into the house carrying chametz in his hands, and nevertheless, the parents don't become angry. This is like the second time we blow shofar, and the Satan becomes very afraid. Due to his fear, he isn't able to speak *kitrug* against the Jewish people.