

Bais Yaacov Bnos Malka Newsletter

לעילוי נשמת יצחק עקיבא בן אהרן ז"ל

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Parshas Shemos

פרשת שמות

טבת תשפ"ד



Gratitude to Others and Gratitude to Hashem

In the *parshiyos* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Torah describes Pharaoh's *kefira* against *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Pharaoh denies the existence of *Hashem* and stubbornly maintains this denial despite proof after proof after proof. What was the root of Pharaoh's irrational *kefira* despite the many proofs to the contrary?

The Torah writes: "A new king arose over Egypt, אשר לא ידע את יוסף, who did not know of Yosef" (*Shemos* 1:8). Rashi quotes the *midrash*, which explains that Pharaoh "עשה עצמו כאילו לא ידעו" – he acted as though he did not know Yosef. He did not think of the great things Yosef had done for *Mitzrayim*; he had no *hakaras hatov* for Yosef. The *midrash* that Rashi quotes continues, noting that the Torah later records that Pharaoh said, "לא ידעתי את ה'", "I do not know *Hashem*" (*Shemos* 5:2). The *midrash* points out the use of the similar verb, "ידע": "Now, he does not know of Yosef, and in the future, he will say he does not know *Hashem*." Failure to show *hakaras hatov* to people eventually leads to failure to show *hakaras hatov* to *Hashem*.

A less known *midrash* states this point explicitly. The *midrash* writes that a person who is *kafuy tov* is punished so severely because not being *makir tov* to a person is similar to *kefira* of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. If a person is *kafuy tov* to a friend, he will eventually be *kafuy tov* to his Creator. This is what happened to Pharaoh. First, he did not recognize what Yosef did for him, and eventually he denied everything that *Hashem* had done for him as well. We learn from here that *kefiyas hatova* is comparable to *kefira b'ikar*.

This *midrash* highlights the danger of being a *kafuy tov*. Failure to thank your friends may lead, *chas v'shalom*, to not recognizing and appreciating what *Hashem* Himself does for you.

Rav Schachter *shlit"a* quotes a beautiful *pshat* of Rav Soloveitchik *ztz"l* on this point: The *gemara* discusses the proper language of the conclusion of a *bracha* in praise of *Hashem*. Rav Yochanan says we should refer to "*rov hatishbachos*," indicating that *Hashem* is given many praises. The *gemara* notes, however, that "*rov*" indicates that *Hashem* is given "most," but not all, of the praises. Rava in fact says that we should refer to "*kol hatishbachos*," all of the praises. The *gemara* concludes that we should say both – *rov* and *kol*.

But why should we mention "*rov*" at all? It makes more sense to say that *Hashem* deserves all of the praises, not just most of them! The Rav explains that perhaps the message of "*rov hatishbachos*" is that we keep a little bit of the *tishbachos* to praise other people. A person can go through life and never thank anyone for anything. He might say, "I get everything from *Hashem*, so I don't need to thank people for anything!" If a person has that attitude and does not get into the habit of thanking other people, he will eventually not be focused on thanking *Hashem* either. Therefore, we mention *rov hatishbachos*. The *rov* of our praises goes to *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*, while the rest of the praises go to other people who help us. This is a deep insight of Rav Soloveitchik into this striking *gemara*.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* develops this idea at great length. A major component of our *avodas Hashem* is built on *hakaras hatov*. If we were to really thank *Hashem* for everything He does for us and have the proper appreciation, we would be much more likely to serve Him properly.

When the Torah describes the *Migdal Bavel*, it writes: “*Hashem* descended to see the city and tower that the *bnei ha’adam*, the sons of man, had built” (*Bereishis* 11:5). The *midrash* asks why the people are referred to as “sons of man.” Isn’t that obvious? The *midrash* explains that this is a hint that they were the sons of Adam HaRishon and followed in his footsteps. Adam HaRishon was *kafuy tov* when he blamed the wife whom *Hashem* had given him for leading him to do a *chet*. Similarly, the *Dor Haflaga* was *kafuy tov* to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. They are called “*bnei ha’adam*” because they had taken on a similar *midda* to Adam HaRishon.

The *meforshim* explain the *midrash* as follows. Originally, there was a common language, a *safa achas*, which made it easier for people to communicate with each other. This was a gift, but instead of using it in a productive way, the people used it to turn against *Hashem*. They were *kafuy tov*. The *midrash* is teaching us that the language of the *posuk* hints that they lacked *hakaras hatov*. We have to always remind ourselves to thank others for what they do for us, and of course to thank *Hashem* for everything He does for us.

In Rav Zelig Pliskin *shlit”a*’s wonderful book, *Thank You*, he discusses the idea of becoming a gratitude-oriented person, thanking *Hashem* for what He does for us and thanking other people for what they do for us. In fact, if we thanked *Hashem* constantly for all the “natural” things He does for us, we would realize how much good we have and we would be more *besimcha*. He writes:

The first thing we say when we wake up in the morning is the one-line statement that we are grateful for being alive; in Hebrew, it is *Modeh Ani*...That’s amazing, isn’t it? The first words we utter each day say that we are grateful. This sets the tone for the entire day. “Today I will be grateful from the moment I wake up.” Throughout the day, say with enthusiasm, “I am grateful I am alive!” “But what if I don’t actually feel this way?”... The solution to this is to follow the famous advice of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in *Mesilas Yesharim*, chapter seven: “Act externally as if you were enthusiastic, and you will increase your inner feelings of enthusiasm.” Right now you can practice this. Repeat over and over again with enthusiasm, “I am grateful I am alive!”

Rav Pliskin shares a letter of someone who resolved to write a thank you letter to *Hashem* each morning for a week. The first letter reads:

Dear *Hashem*,

Right now, I am typing this gratitude letter to You on my computer. I thank You for the computer to write this on. And I thank You for the energy to move my fingers to be able to type this. And I thank You for the eyes to see what I am writing. And I thank You for the chair that I am sitting on and the desk that holds the computer. I thank You for Your oxygen that You are giving me to be able to breath and keep alive. And I am grateful to You for my being alive. I really should have mentioned this first, but I am writing this to You in the order of my thinking of these ideas. I thank You for my memory that enables me to remember how to spell. This can be taken for granted, but not when one knows how fragile memory can be. I thank You for my being able to hear the sounds that I now hear. And I thank You for enabling me to hear all the words of Torah that I have already heard. I thank You for enabling me to hear the songs and the music that have enriched my life. I thank You for my family and I thank You for my friends. I thank You for the electricity that enables me to be cool when it is hot outside. I thank You for the electricity so I can drink cold water and I thank You for the water. I thank You for giving me so much for which to be grateful. I pray to You to help me remember to write You a thank you letter each morning. This way I will be thanking You before I continue benefitting from Your kindnesses throughout the day.

Thank you,

Your grateful child and servant

People who train themselves to always have *hakaras hatov* to *Hashem* and to other people are happier and have more *simchas hachaim*. Rav Pliskin develops this theme in his book *Happiness*:

We each have much to appreciate and enjoy every day of our lives. What stops us? It's easy to take that which we already have for granted.

We are excited with new things. We focus on the pleasure and feel good. After we get used to what we have, we tend not to focus on it any longer. We tend to focus on what we don't have... Train your brain to become more mindfully aware of all that you can appreciate and enjoy. Be mindful of your ability to see. Be mindful of your ability to hear. Be mindful of your ability to talk. Be mindful of your ability to walk. Be mindful of your ability to move your hands, and to lift, pull, turn, press, and hold things with them. This alone will transform your life. The person who is mindful about these things will have a brain that is so full of appreciation and enjoyment that it will be free from many of the thoughts and pictures that create bad feelings... Imagine how appreciative you would feel if you were missing all that you have and then you obtained them one by one... Add a spiritual dimension of appreciating everything you have as a gift from your loving Father and powerful King, Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Appreciate His love for you and reciprocate by feeling love for the Giver of all that you have. Being immersed in these feelings will enable you to live a life of gratitude, happiness, and joy.

I certainly encourage you to read these books. They can transform your life.

In his book, *From Pulpit to Couch*, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski *shlit"ta* quotes a poem by an unknown author about this idea:

The park bench was deserted as I sat down to read
Beneath the long, straggly branches of an old willow tree.
Disillusioned by life with good reason to frown,
For the world was intent on dragging me down.

And if that weren't enough to ruin my day,
A young boy out of breath approached me, all tired from play.
He stood right before me with his head tilted down
And said with great excitement, "Look at what I found."

In his hand was a flower, and what a pitiful sight,
With its petals all worn – not enough rain, or too little light.
Wanting him to take his dead flower and go off to play,
I faked a small smile and then shifted away.

But instead of retreating, he sat down next to my side,
And placed the flower to his nose and declared with overacted surprise,
"It sure smells pretty and it's beautiful, too.
That's why I picked it; here, it's for you."

The weed before me was dying or dead,
Not vibrant of colors, orange, yellow, or red.
But I knew I must take it, or he might never leave.
So I reached for the flower, and replied, "Just what I need."

But instead of him placing the flower in my hand,
He held it midair without reason or plan.
It was then that I noticed for the very first time
That weed-toting boy could not see: he was blind.

I heard my voice quiver, tears shone like the sun
As I thanked him for picking the very best one.
"You're welcome," He smiled, and then ran off to play,
Unaware of the impact he'd had on my day.

I sat there and wondered how he managed to see
A self-pitying woman beneath an old willow tree.
How did he know of my self-indulged plight?
Perhaps from his heart, he'd been blessed with true sight.

Through the eyes of a blind child, at last I could see
And for all those times I myself had been blind.
The problem was not with the world; the problem was me.
I vowed to see the beauty in life, and appreciate every second that's mine.

And then I held that wilted flower up to my nose
And breathed in the fragrance of a beautiful rose
And smiled as I watched that young boy, another weed in his hand
About to change the life of an unsuspecting old man.

Rabbi Twerski concludes: "We need only to be reminded of our blessings to find happiness within our reach in everyday experiences... if we are not blind to them!"

Have a wonderful Shabbos!
Chana Ginsburg

The Dvar Torah has been adapted from the seforim of Rav Beinish Ginsburg

הגעגועים לבית

Longing for Home

Bnos Malka Writes about Longing for Yerushalayim

As part of our language enrichment program, Bnos Malka was taken back in time to the magical time period in which Am Yisrael was zocheh to tremendous Kirvat Elokim. The girls experienced these feelings of yearning to revert back to those times.

The classes engaged in an amazing writing process for this activity. Each class began by studying the type of writing they were meant to implement. They wrote drafts of their work, made corrections with regards to both style, form and content, and then perfected their final drafts. It was a tremendous project of learning and writing!

ה"בנות מלכה" מאלירימ את הלספ
בנות מלכה מתגעגעות
וכותבות לירושלים.

התלמידות היקרות חזרו לתקופה
הקסומה שבה עמ"י זכה לקרבת
אלוקים מיוחדת וחשו געגועים
וכיסופים לחזור לימי קדם...

התלמידות עברו תהליך מיוחד
בביצוע הכתיבות!!!
לפני הכתיבה למדו את הסוגה והמאפיינים,
במהלך הכתיבה שמו לב לכתיב נכון,
מבנה תחבירי, התאמה לסוגה ועוד..
בשלב הטיוטה בדקו, למדו לתקן
להוסיף ולהרחיב!!!

Alef

The girls learned about the mashal of the Ben Ish Chai called 'Ir V'Eim'. After careful introspection, Each girl made a promise, a Kabbalah, to Ima Yerushalayim, expressing a prayer or good deed that she will work on in her merit.



כיתה א'

ספרנו את משל ה"בן איש חי"
המרגש עיר ואם.
תלמידות כיתה א' כתבו את ההבטחות לאימא
ירושלים "אם אשכחך" - לא נשכח, נתפלל
ונרבה במצוות ומעשים טובים...



Bet

The girls wrote about an imaginary conversation between a girl from the times of the Beit Mikdash and modern times. The title was 'Yerushalayim of Gold' highlighting the beauty and splendour of Yerushalayim, particularly when the Shechina rests within it.



כיתה ב'

תלמידות כיתה ב' כתבו דו שיח דמיוני בין ילדה מתקופת בית המקדש לילדה מימינו. הכותרת לכתובות "ירושלים של זהב" - הממחישה את הפאר והיופי של ירושלים הבנויה כשהשכינה שורה בה.

Gimmel

Past, present and future intertwined as the class 'discovered' letters from children during the time of the 'Churban' in the caves of Yerushalayim, and brought them home to read, discover and bring to life these ancient feelings.



כיתה ג'

ממערות ירושלים נמצאו מכתבי ילדים מתקופת החורבן. תלמידות כיתה ג' היו שם והביאו לנו את המכתבים. עבר הווה ועתיד נפגשים במכתבים מרגשים.

Daled

The class wrote and illustrated an original comic strip called 'Journey towards Mashiach' detailing the specific ways they came up with that would bring each person closer to being metakein the sin of sinat chin am.



כיתה ד'

תלמידות כיתה ד' כתבו ואיירו קומיקס "המסע אל המשיח" מתקנים את שנאת החינם...

Hey

The class wrote a formal 'degem teanah', an opinion piece, describing our inability to fully understand what we are lacking in the Galut, and offered suggestion on how to deepen our longing for the Geula.



כיתה ה'

תלמידות כיתה ה' כתבו ב"דגם טענה" - הבעת דעה. על אי תחושת החסר העמוקה של הגלות, הריחוק והרגש שכהה, והציעו רעיונות שיעוררו בתוכנו את הציפיה העמוקה לגאולה השלימה.



Vav

The class wrote letters to Hashem. They expressed their heartfelt sorrow on the current situation, longing for what they don't even fully know, and yearnings for the Geula!



כיתה ו'

תלמידות כיתה ו' כתבו מכתבים לאבא שלנו שבשמים. במכתב הביעו את הכאב על המצב, געגוע על מה שאיננו מכירים ותקווה בביאת המשיח...



Each piece was thought provoking, emotional and original!!!

A huge congratulations and thank you to both the students and teachers on such amazing a creative work!

Thank you to our wonderful Menahelit for all of the Anazing prizes that were distributed at the close of our writing project!

Ily we will continue to engage in enriching projects to further writing and language together. With much thanks and tefilla for the building up of Yerushalayim Ily speedily in our days,

Tzofia Ekda
Hebrew program coordinator

חשבתן! כתבתן! והכתיבות מיוחדות, מדויקות ומעניינות!!!
כל הכבוד!

צל"ש למורות ולתלמידות היצירתיות!

תודה רבה למנהלת היקרה שלנו על פרסי ההערכה שחילקה לתלמידות! יחד נמשיך ללמוד לכתוב ולהעשיר את השפה ב"בנות מלכה" בהערכה רבה ובתפילה ל"בונה ירושלים עיר הקודש במהרה בימינו אמן"

רכזת צברית
מאורכ צופיה אקדא