

Sefer Shemos

IN MEMORY OF R' SRULY MILLER A"H

GRANDSON OF RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L
DEDICATED BY HIS CHILDREN

פרשת כי תשא

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Two Forms of Kindliness

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Part I. Kindliness

The Emergency Formula

Sometimes when a Jew is very ill *chalilah* – he's already in the extremities – so his relative rushes to the nearest synagogue and asks the congregants who are standing there to say the special prayer for somebody who is in grave danger. They don't just say Tehillim – *kepitelech* Tehillim are for an ordinary sick person but when a person is in dire condition, when it's a last minute emergency, so then they say a special formula that you'll find printed in the back of the Tehillim.

The same thing is when the *Yomim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, approach. Those days when we are about to be inscribed for the coming year are also a last minute emergency and so we get up early in the morning and go to shul to seek the favor of Hashem. And in our *selichos* we say that same formula that is used for the dying man. And we say it more than once – sometimes it's said four or five times; over and over again we repeat the words.

Now, included in that formula – actually it's the crux of the entire *tefillah* – are a few *pesukim* from this week's *sedrah*. After the sin of the golden calf, when Hakodosh Boruch Hu had already reconciled with His nation, Moshe Rabeinu made a special request from Hashem: "Make known to me Your ways" (Ki Sisa 33:13). Moshe wished to gain an understanding of Hashem's conduct with man; when a person knows that so he's already prepared to deal with all the tests of this world – to know His ways with Man means that you know the secret to success.

Significant Attributes

And so, וַיַּעֲבֵר הַשֵּׁם עַל פְּנֵי, – Hashem passed by Moshe, וַיִּקְרָא – and He called out: הַשֵּׁם הַשֵּׁם – that's one, two, אָרְבָּה אַפְּיִם, – three, four, five, אֶל-ל רְחוּם וְחַנּוּן, – and so on. Hashem called out to Moshe the thirteen names that describe His attributes; the *yud gimmel middos shel rachamim*, the thirteen ways of kindness by which Hashem conducts the affairs of this world. "If you want to know who I am," Hashem says, "study these words and by means of that you will find favor in My eyes" (see 33:13).

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Lieilu Nishmas Gila bas Mordechai a"h

These *pesukim* are of such significance that the *gemara* (Rosh Hashana 17b) tells us that at that time Hakodosh Boruch Hu *k'viyachol* put on a *tallis gadol* and he revealed to Moshe that that is the method of praying to Him in a time of need. That's why when we seek special favor from Hashem – when a person appears to be in his death throes or when the nation on a whole is seeking forgiveness – we enumerate these thirteen attributes; it's considered one of the most effective prayers – every loyal Jew knows that repeating the *yud gimmel middos* are a salvation.

However, most people think it's just a formula – you say it and that's the way of gaining atonement for one's sins – and so they say it again and again and again without thinking what they're saying. Of course, you don't have time anyhow because even if you would try to put some thought into it, the *shaliach tzibbur* will already be onto the next one before you finish this one; but it's a good idea anyhow, at least once in a while to say the words slowly.

Volumes of Great Wisdom

But the truth is that even when we say the words slowly – suppose you let the *shaliach tzibbur* run ahead and you take some time to think about the words – we're disappointed because we don't really understand what the big hullabaloo is all about. After all, when we listen to Hashem's acquiescence to Moshe – “And I will cause all of My goodness to pass before you” – so we expect some sort of tremendous revelation, a *chiddush gadol*, something even mystical maybe. And so we're surprised, even let down, that all Moshe heard was this verse.

But we understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wasn't playing any tricks on Moshe and therefore you must say that there is something big here; it's not just words. Hashem was teaching Moshe thirteen *mesichtos* of information; thirteen great volumes of wisdom are contained in this prophecy of Hashem to Moshe.

The truth is that there's so much to say about each of these thirteen attributes that the word *mesichta* is an understatement. Each one is an *entire Shas* of wisdom – it's not an exaggeration to say each one is *more* than the Shas. After all, if you work hard you can finish Shas – anybody who is ambitious can finish Shas. Of course, if you start when you're eighty five, I don't know, but if you start a little earlier in life and you're ambitious you can do it. But to study the ways of Hashem in the world is many sets of Shas; it's Bavli and Yerushalmi and many times more than that.

Understanding the Name

Now, I'm not the one who is capable of opening up these great volumes of wisdom and explaining them to you, but we should try at least to take a peek. Even if it's only a drop out of the ocean but one drop of understanding the *darkei Hashem* in the world is already a remarkable achievement. And if merely repeating the *yud gimmel middos* can bring great salvation – and they can – surely if we make an attempt to study them, to understand the ways of Hashem in this world, we'll merit all types of *yeshuos*.

And so, tonight we'll make an attempt to study the first attribute; the name “Hashem.” Now, it's not the custom to say openly the *shem hameforash* or even the letters of His name so instead of a *hey* we'll say *kei*. It's *yud kei vav kei*. Now how to pronounce that word exactly it's not known. The fact that the gentiles pronounce it in their manner is certainly erroneous – the ‘J. Witnesses’ who use that name are pronouncing it incorrectly, there's no question about that.

But whatever the pronunciation is, immediately we see that the root of the word *yud kei vav kei* is the word *hoveh*, ‘being’ or *hayah*, ‘to be’. It means much more than that, but it's clear that this word has some connection with being, existence. It means, not only that He has intrinsic existence, but He is *mehaveh*; He causes existence to continue. Everything that ever existed,

everything that exists now and anything that will ever exist; it's only because Hashem wills it to exist. *Yud kei vuv kei* means that everything is under the control of Hakadosh Baruch Hu; He has all the wires in his hand and He's pulling all the wires all the time.

Existence and Kindliness

But that's only the beginning because we have a tradition that *yud kei vuv kei* refers not only to Hashem's existence but to His *midas hachessed*, His attribute of kindliness. It means that whatever wires He's pulling, whatever happens in the world, it's always by means of His *middas hachessed*.

The truth is that it's not merely our tradition – it's what anybody who opens his eyes will understand. If we look, we can see that *everything* in the world; all of existence, is made for a kindly purpose. If you'll study the world properly – even though sometimes you may not be able to understand everything – but you'll learn that *chessed Hashem malah ha'aretz*, that the world is full of the kindliness of Hashem (Tehillim 33:5).

Marvelous Soil

Right away as soon as you take your first step on the earth you know that the earth is kindliness – if you walk outside tonight and you step off the pavement onto the soil, you have to know that you're walking on the *chasdei Hashem*. You should practice that once in a while; at least for a few steps while you're walking on the soil remind yourself that you're walking on a source of happiness.

Soil is a tremendous gift; there's nothing like it. It's a marvelous material, almost unmatched among all the chemical combinations. I say "chemical" but the truth is the soil is more alive than inanimate. There are more living creatures in one spoonful of soil than there are human beings in all of Greater New York! Earth is filled with functioning organisms; billions of bacteria and

fungi and ants and earthworms – the armies of Hashem all working together to produce food for us.

Food and Clothing

From the soil comes grass and grass is everything to us – the cows eat grass and they produce milk. Cheese and butter and cream all come from the grass that cows eat. Meat too! The cows eat grass and they turn that grass into more meat and into more calves too. So the meat that we enjoy in the *chulent* is from grass, from the soil. And that's only one example – all the food we enjoy all the days of our lives come from the soil.

But it's not only the kindness of all of our food that we get from Hashem's soil; all of our clothing also comes from the soil. If you wear woolen garments, it comes from the soil because where do the sheep get the wool that grows on their backs? They don't eat wool – they eat grass and turn it into wool. And where does grass come from? From the soil. Cotton comes from the soil. Linen comes from the soil. You wear a silk shirt? That's also from the soil because the silkworm cannot produce silk unless it eats materials that it turns into silk. It eats mulberry leaves which come from the soil.

The seas, the oceans, the lakes, the rivers are full of *chessed*. Beautiful fat shiny fish come out; juicy fish. Think of all the meals you could make out of fish. Just like you harvest the fields to take off the crops, you harvest the seas to take out those fat juicy fish. Hundreds of tons of fish are harvested every day from the sea. Look in the windows where fish is displayed; stop once and take a look. Not to buy something; just to see with your own eyes the *chasdei Hashem*. Ah! A pleasure.

A Very Good World

But I'm just beginning. Clouds are a happiness! Rain is a big *simcha*! You can see? Hashem gave you two functioning eyes? Ahh, it's a pleasure to

see the colors of the world around us. *Gadlo v'tuvo malei Olam*, his greatness and his kindness fill the world!

Now, I know that when I say these words it doesn't register in our minds; it seems like an exaggeration but the truth is that it's only a drop in the bucket of what the word Hashem means; the world is filled with millions of forms of kindness that Hashem has bestowed upon us and even if we sit here and speak together all night, whatever kindness we would mention is only a fraction of the *chesed Hashem*.

The more you think about it the more you realize that that *עולם הַסֶּדֶר יִבְנֶה* – Hashem built this world for the purpose of kindness (Tehillim 89:3). Every detail you observe points in one direction: Not only is there a Creator, a *yud kei vuv kei*, that brought everything into existence and continues to sustain its existence, but that the Creator is a *Chofetz Chesed* whose sole intention is to bestow happiness on Mankind. The name Hashem is the attribute of endless *chesed* that is being bestowed upon the world.

Part II. A Different Kindliness

Identical Attributes?

But now we come to a big question. Because after Hakodosh Boruch Hu called out to Moshe and revealed His first and most overwhelming way in the world –“Hashem, the *Chofetz Chesed*”– He called out His second attribute. And what was it? He called out “Hashem” a second time; the same *yud kei vuv kei*.

Now, you shouldn't think it's the same as the first Hashem, that it's just added for emphasis – in case you were daydreaming when you said the first “Hashem,” so you get another chance. Oh no; the second “Hashem” is counted as the second of His attributes – it's the second in the list of the thirteen attributes.

Now, our sages (Rosh Hashana 17b) were puzzled by that: How can “Hashem, Hashem” be considered two separate attributes? After all they're exactly the same word. The same word should mean two different ways of Hashem in the world?

Same But Different

And so the Gemara explains that even though it looks like they're the same words but they're not the same: *אָנִי הוּא קִדְמָה שֶׁיִּקְחָא הָאָדָם וְאֲנִי הוּא לְאַחַר* – *I'm your Hashem before you sin and I'm Hashem after you sin.*

It means that there are two separate ways that Hashem, the *Chofetz Chesed*, deals with Mankind in this world. One way is before a man blunders and one after, but either way Hashem is still dealing with you with His attribute of Hashem, of kindness.

Do you think that Hashem changes after a man makes a misstep? That He's a different G-d now? He's angry and vengeful now?

Oh no! Hashem before you fell is the same Hashem after you fell; He doesn't change at all. He's still *yud kei vuv kei*, the Hashem of *olam chesed yibaneh*, only that now He's helping you in a different way.

The Good Wife

I'll give you a *mashal*. Let's say when you were still young and healthy – you took care of yourself and you had a good strong stomach so you could eat all types of bread. Your wife serves you meat and kugels; all types of good foods. Sometimes she brings you a piece of chocolate cake too. She's a very good wife, a wife of kindness, and your dinner table is a world of *chesed*.

But now *chalilah*, you spoiled your stomach by eating *nosherei* and the doctor says you have to eat a different diet, blander foods. And so you're sitting by the table waiting for your regular treats and your wife brings in a plate with some crackers

and a cup of milk. So you say to her, “Chana, you were always such a good wife to me. You always gave me good things to eat. Now you only give me crackers and milk?”

So she says, “I’m still the same loyal wife, but you can’t eat meat and black bread anymore. It’ll ruin you! Your stomach can’t take it anymore.” Now, we understand that it’s the same kindly wife; only it’s *kodem hacheit v’achar hacheit*. Your wife didn’t change – you changed and she’s giving you what’s best for you now.

The Good Garden

Hashem doesn’t change! And that means that all of that *chesed* included in the first *yud kei vuv kei* is no less in the second *yud kei vuv kei*. It’s exactly the same Hashem before the *cheit* and after the *cheit*. There is no change in Him at all – only that sometimes what’s best for you is crackers and milk instead of kugels.

We’ll take *Adam Harishon*, the first man, as an example. Before he sinned he lived in Gan Eden. Ahh! Gan Eden! In that garden Adam was given every form of happiness in *gashmiyus*. Big apples and oranges were hanging from the tree, as big as trunks. Great big dates were growing – you had to watch out; if one would fall on your head you’d go to the hospital.

And they were so beautiful! It was so delightful to look at that just to walk through that garden was a happiness. As Adam and Chava strolled in the garden together they enjoyed the beautiful sights. And as they ate the delicious fruit they were dancing with happiness – they didn’t need musical instruments to excite them; *Olam Hazeh* on its own was exhilarating for them. They were singing to Hakodosh Boruch Hu – that’s the great ideal of *shiru lo zamru lo* – and every minute they were gaining more *emunah*, more closeness to Hashem and more *ahavas Hashem*.

Banished From the Garden

That was the purpose of Gan Eden – so that Man would succeed at the most important function in this world: *וְהָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה שְׂרָאוֹ מִלְפָּנָיו* – *Elokim made this world for what? He did it for one purpose; so that people should be aware of Him* (Koheles 3:14). That’s the great success of our lives – Awareness of Hashem. And happiness is the most effective way of becoming great in recognizing the Creator. The *chesed Hashem* that was demonstrated in Gan Eden was to Adam and Chava was an opportunity for endless greatness because in happiness it’s possible to attain the utmost perfection.

That was the *seder habriah* before the *cheit* – that’s how they were expected to live before that great mistake was committed. But then Adam and Chava toppled from that tremendous opportunity; the *cheit* took place – why it took place has to be explained at length; it’s not our discussion now – but it happened. And now, *וַיִּגְרַשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם* – *Hashem drove out man from Gan Eden and He said to him, בְּעֵצָבוֹן תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם – “From now on you’re going to eat bread with the sweat of your brow. וְקוֹץ וְדוֹרֵד יִקְוֶץ וְדוֹרֵד יִקְוֶץ וְדוֹרֵד יִקְוֶץ – Sometimes Man will find some thorns or weeds in life”* (Bereishis ch. 3). It’s going to be a different existence entirely; from now on life won’t always be a bowl of cherries anymore.

Now, the question is why did Hashem make such a decree? So people think it was just to punish Adam: “You weren’t good so now I’m going to give it to you.” Oh no! What we’re learning now is that it’s still the same Hashem – He’s the same *Chofetz Chesed* as before. We should not even for a second let the *itzavon* and the thorns and the weeds in our lives weaken our understanding of that great principle that it’s the same Hashem and that the full measure of kindness is still being given after the *cheit* just the same.

Banished Not Punished

וַיִּגְרַשׁ was for Adam's benefit. It's not "Smack! Get out of my Hebrew school!" It's, "I'm sending you to a different *chesed* department, a separate department for achieving awareness of Hashem and succeeding in life – a place where you'll benefit more than you can benefit here." Just like man is expected to achieve perfection and greatness by utilizing happiness, there are some times when Hashem brings hardships, difficulties, on a person.

Because after the *cheit* the first place is not good for you anymore. Endless good causes you to forget about Him – it's human nature. It's like the rich man who looks out of his penthouse window and he sees the dome of Dime Savings Bank and he knows that under that dome he has vaults that are filled with valuables that he put away there; it's very hard for him to raise his eyes above the dome and think of something higher than that.

But the poor man – he can't look out of his tenement window because it's blocked by other tenement houses; he sees nothing but poverty all around him – he has nothing on which to rely, so it's easy for him to think of Hashem.

And therefore we understand that the second Hashem, when life is no longer a bowl of cherries, is still a great kindness. Sometimes the hardships and the troubles are the best thing that can be done for you. It's the kindness of accomplishing in this world, of gaining favor in the eyes of Hashem by responding properly to troubles in life and using them to succeed in this world.

Still In The Garden

Now before we go to our subject of succeeding in the midst of difficulty, we should understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu never lets go completely of the first *middah* of Hashem. It's true that everyone has difficulties in life – nobody is spared from that – but no matter, we should always remember that there is endless happiness in this world too.

And the wise man makes use of that happiness as much as possible. That's why Koheles told us, **בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה הָיְיָ בְּטוֹב** – *In the good day be in good* (7:14). What does it mean "be in good"? If it's a good day, naturally you're good. Isn't this superfluous to say?

No; "be in good" means you should *utilize* a good day. It means that when you're walking in the street and there's nice weather, don't waste your thoughts thinking about that sharp comment your wife made this morning as you walked out the door. **בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה הָיְיָ בְּטוֹב** – *It's a good day! So be in a good mood* and thank Hashem for the beautiful day. Ahh, the sweetness of the sun shining down on my face warming me up. And the refreshing breeze is blowing on my face. Don't give up that opportunity to draw forth happiness from the depths of your mind.

You're well? Everything in your body is functioning smoothly more or less? Make sure to not let go of that day! You have good days in your life, don't you? If someone would stop you, "Mr. So and So, do you have a headache?" No. "Do your eyes hurt?" No. "Do your teeth hurt?" No. "Does your throat hurt?" No. "Do your ears hurt?" No. "Does your stomach hurt?" No. "Nothing hurts?!" No.

We Love Hashem!

So what are you so glum about? You should be smiling! If you're sitting here right now – you're alive, you're breathing – that's already a big happiness. Let's all say together, "We love You Hashem with all our hearts!" Don't be embarrassed to say it out loud! If you like, you can repeat it tomorrow during the day too. If you have to, walk over to the public phone and make a long distance call to Hashem and tell Him "I love You Hashem!"

And therefore Koheles says, *on a good day, be in a good mood*. "Please," Shlomo Hamelech says, "don't be dumb. Don't be a fool and waste your life." It's a very important lesson he's telling us here. To a certain extent we're still in Gan Eden

right now and Hashem is giving that to you for a purpose; so that you should wake up and thank Him. And if you're able to do that, then you're the biggest success – by appreciating the *chasdei Hashem* and by loving Hashem you're coming closer and closer to Him in the form that is the most acceptable form, the *Hashem kodem hacheit*.

And even more than that, you're fortifying yourself with vitamins of happiness so you'll be able to succeed when the periods of *Hashem li'achar hacheit* come. If a man prepares himself in the days where things are going well, if he's "in good on the good day," so then when a crunch comes, he's more capable of succeeding. And that's the great advice of the *chochom mikol adam*: **בְּיָוֶם טוֹבָה הֵיְהִי בְטוֹב** – *When things are going well, prepare. Gather confidence and happiness for the future.*

Part III. Kindliness Forever

Seeing the Kindliness

Now, no matter how much happiness a person has stored away in his mind from all the *chasdei Hashem*, we understand that nobody lives with the *middah* of *Hashem kodem hacheit* all the time. Nobody is perfect and therefore it's not always going to be smooth sailing – there are bumps in the road, little bumps and big bumps, for everyone. And yet we have to understand that the real tragedy, the biggest bump, is when a person fails to utilize the opportunities that *Hashem achar hacheit* is opening for each one of us.

We have to know that whatever "happens" to a person is Hashem's will. Nobody is sick, nobody has any difficulties, because of an accident. And when Hakodosh Boruch Hu makes a decree like that, we go back to our fundamental principle of *Hashem Hashem* – that whether it's *Hashem koidem hacheit* or *l'achar hacheit* it must be for this man's benefit. *Kol orchos Hashem chesed v'emmes* – All the ways of Hashem are kindliness and truth

(Tehillim 25:10). *Kol* means *kol!* Everything, without exception, is kindly.

Gain Awareness

Actually it's a question that all thinking men ask at one time or another. Because *chalilah* sometimes things happen. Here's a man who's successful, and all of a sudden a freak misfortune happens to him and now he's in the hospital.

So he's thinking, "Why did this happen to me? I was a good *frum* Jew more or less. Everything was going smoothly with me. Hashem was so kind to me till now. Why did Hashem do this?"

And the answer is as follows: There is a great kindness that's even more important than all the *chassodim* in the world – more important than good health, more important than *parnasah* and *shalom bayis*. And that's the kindness called *yiras Hashem*. *Yiras Hashem!* To be Aware of Hashem, that's the most important thing in your life.

Now, I understand that this sounds queer to the ears of those who live with materialism but it's a fundamental principle that we must get into our heads. We are here to gain Awareness of Hashem – that's your success in this world. And just because of that, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is always manipulating the events of a person's life so that he shouldn't be a failure.

Remembering Poppy

It's like a man who is carrying his child on his shoulders – and this child is so happy riding on high; everything is going so well that he forgets all about his father – he thinks *he's* the tall one. So he starts kicking with his feet; he's kicking his father in the chest with his feet, he's so happy.

So the father saw now that his son was not aware of him anymore; his child was riding on high. So when the father saw a dog coming, he put the child down near the dog, "Oh, Poppy, Poppy, save me!" the child cries out. "Oh," the father said, "So I'm a Poppy now!"

That's why whenever you have any difficulty in life, any disturbance, you should know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is helping you remember Him. Take advantage of it. You have a toothache? You should thank Hashem for the toothache because it's breaking down the *mechitzos*, the barriers, between you and Hashem.

Healthy Teeth

Now, if you were a smart man you would have made good use of Hashem's *chesed kodem hacheit*. While your teeth were all healthy you would have been happy with your teeth and you would have thanked Hashem all the time for that. You're able to chew? You're able to take a bite from an apple? So thank Hashem!

But what happens? You don't even know you have teeth – you could walk around for months without appreciating the happiness of teeth, of biting and chewing. When do you remember the *chesed Hashem* of teeth? Only when Hashem sends you a reminder in the middle of the night. "Ooh Hashem! Save me! My tooth! My tooth!"

Going To the Dentist

Now you remember all about the teeth Hashem is giving you every day. When you're in trouble suddenly you remember Poppy. On the way to the dentist you pray to Hashem that the dentist should be able to help you and relieve the pain. Also when he's drilling, you have to daven that his hand shouldn't slip. Sometimes he slips and he drills the next tooth, you know. He doesn't say anything; he keeps quiet. But a few months later you'll have to come back for this tooth to be filled.

And so you go to the dentist and say, "Ribono Shel Olam, *yehi ratzon mil'fanecha* that You should give success to the doctor, whatever he has to do for me." Ahh that wonderful toothache – it's the great opportunity to break down that *mechitzah* wall between you and Hashem.

And now we have an answer to the age old question of why "bad" things happen to good people: Because the truth is it's not bad – it's just a different kind of good. It's a bland cracker instead of tasty kugel but it's exactly what you need right now.

Visiting the Sick

Everyone knows that there's a *din* of *bikur cholim*, a *mitzvah* to visit somebody who is sick. You see what you can do for him. Maybe you can cheer him up with consolation, or you can help him with things that he needs. If he's in the hospital, you can bring him kosher food. Whatever it is, it's an important *mitzvah*.

Now suppose when you come by he's lying on a pallet on the floor. This happens sometimes. He's lying on the floor on the pallet, on the stretcher. So the Gemara says that it's *ossur* to sit down on a chair. If you wish to sit next to him, you must sit on the floor alongside him. Why is that? Because the *shechinah* is *lemaalah m'rashosav*, the *Shechinah* is there right over his head so how can you sit higher than the *Shechinah*?

Now, that's a remarkable statement. Why should the *Shechinah* come to a sick man? Is he such a big *tzadik*? He's a regular Jew. What did he do? He became sick, that's all.

Resting on The Humble

And so we'll say like this: When a man is well and everything is going smoothly so *שְׂמֵחַ עַבְדֵיךָ*, he becomes arrogant, *וַיִּטַּשׁ אֱלֹהֵי עֲשָׂוֵהוּ*, and he forsakes Hashem (Devarim 32:15). Hakodosh Boruch Hu is far away from his mind now. And if Hakodosh Boruch Hu is far away from you then no matter how healthy and successful you are, no matter how smooth things are going, you're a failure.

But when he's broken and low, it's a whole different story. So this man now as he lays on the floor, he's a broken man. The arrogance, the *ga'avah*, that almost everybody suffers from is

erased from his mind and Hashem says, "That's the man I'm looking for!" and He comes down close to him.

You become now somebody beloved by Hashem. וְאֵת דְּבָא וְשִׁפְלָא רַוּחַ – The Shechina rests on the broken man, on those who are low of spirit. Why? Because Hashem loves people who are not proud; those are the ones who remember Him.

Sudden Illness

That's why *k'sheim shemivarech al hatov kach mevarech al hara'ah*, you have to make a *brachah* on unfortunate things. When a person is ill, it is the biggest success for him in this world. That's how we have to understand it. Sometimes a serious illness can save a man! I've seen it in life.

Here's a young man working in an office. I knew him. He was a young man with no connection with Torah and *mitzvos* and he's sitting in his office thinking about what fun he'll have at night. He'll go to Manhattan maybe, to the theatre – that's what his life is about, fun and games.

And suddenly one day he faints. He falls on the floor in a faint. And he's hurried to the hospital and he is diagnosed, most surprisingly, as suffering from tuberculosis. He never expected that. And now he must leave home for long months to go to a sanatorium.

The Best Thing

And there he lies on the porch of the hospital for months and months and he's thinking. There's no Manhattan now and no movie theatre so he has time to think. And when he returns cured, he is also cured spiritually. He came back with a resolve to change his life. A true story! And instead of remaining a playboy and becoming a nobody who wasted his life, he entered a yeshiva. He became a rabbi and he conducted a congregation for many years and he was *zocheh* to have good children.

Now when he looked back on that day, that black day of his life when he fainted in the office,

had he not realized the kindness in the *Hashem li'achar hacheit*, it would have remained always a complaint: "Why did this happen to me? Such a terrible thing!"

But actually that disturbance was the best thing that ever happened to him in his whole life. And when he'll go to the next world, he's going to say, "Hashem, I thank You for all the good things, but for this most of all!"

Becoming Better

And so a sick man and his business is a failure, everything is dropping out from underneath him, he shouldn't think of suicide *chas v'Shalom*. On the contrary, he should think, "I hope I could live longer this way because every day that I'm alive, I'm *mechaper*, I'm atoning. I'm getting such a perfection of *anavah*, humility, an achievement that my whole life I never accomplished. On the contrary, I want to live longer because the more I live even in these circumstances, the better I'm becoming."

And therefore anything that happens in our lives, even if it seems at the moment a disappointment, we have to know it's for a very great purpose. *Yissurim mimmarkim*, suffering purifies a person's character. We're not looking for it, but Hakadosh Baruch Hu knows what's good for us. All the *yissurim* are going to be to him an atonement for his sins. He'll be able to enter the next world purified of his *aveiros*. They're already atoned by his sufferings. And so suffering in itself is a big achievement. The hard knocks of life are really the blessings of life.

Knowing the Secret

Now, a person who understands what we said here tonight, so he knows already some of the ways of Hashem and now he's ready for life – he's ready for the good times and the hard knocks because he understands a little bit of the secret of

“Hashem Hashem” that Hakodosh Boruch Hu revealed to Moshe on Har Sinai.

He knows that Hashem never changes – the *chesed Hashem* to help you succeed in this world is always present. The only difference is how He delivers the kindness. Before the *chet* He delivers the kindness in the form of beautiful fruits in the Gan Eden. You walk down the avenue in the shade of these trees and your heart is swelling with joy and happiness, that's one form of *chesed Hashem*. And sometimes there's sadness too. It's a different kind of good, but it's also good. And it's the person who knows how to achieve *shleimus*, perfection, in both the happiness and the difficulties, he's the one who will merit the genuine and eternal happiness in the World to Come.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Utilizing Both Forms of Kindness

Everyone's life is filled with the two attributes of Hashem's dealing with Mankind in this world. Every day this week I will take the time to make myself aware of both of those aspects in my life and I will utilize them for their intended purpose. I will thank Hashem for one of his kindnesses to me that make me happy, and I will also utilize one of the “bumps in the road” to remember to call out to Him for help.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

269 - Seeking Emunah | 512 - In The Sea of Imagination
683 - Pesach, Matzoh and Maror

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

It says in the Gemara (Brachos 10a) that a person should never give up hope and should never stop asking Hashem for mercy, even if a sharp sword is already on his neck. So my question is: Why is Hashem putting the sharp sword on this person's neck in the first place?

A:

And the answer is that Hashem puts the sword on his neck so that he should ask for *rachamim*, so that he should ask Hashem for mercy. The biggest achievement of life is not living itself. Oh no! The biggest achievement of our lives is *emunah* – to believe in Hashem and to become more and more aware of Him.

So if a man has a sharp sword on his neck and now he cries out to Hashem because of that, that's a success. That's his success! Whatever happens subsequently is not important! Just to live, just to continue living, without purpose is unimportant. What's important is the calling out to Hashem.

There's great success in thinking, "I'm calling out to Hashem!" Awareness of Hashem – that's the success of a person and that's why Hakodosh Boruch Hu causes things to happen. Illness comes upon people for the purpose of stimulating them to call out to Hashem. Now, if they heal they're very happy. But that's not the success. The success was that they cried out to Hashem. That's the real success.

TAPE # 809 (November 1990)

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