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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Precious Mind

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Part I. Humility To Hashem

The Kohen and His Servant

In the beginning of this week's *sedrah* we come across a mitzvah that at first glance appears to be quite surprising. וְהָרִים אֶת הַדָּשָׁן. The *kohen Hashem*, the one who's been chosen to do the most sacred work – he's busy all day with the service of Hashem in the House of Hashem – he is the one who is commanded to remove the residual ash from the *korbanos*.

Now; that the leftover ashes have to be removed, we can understand that. If the ashes

would accumulate every day it would become unmanageable after some time. And so of course the ashes had to be taken away. But why did it have to be done by the *kohen* himself? After all such a menial task could have been done by a servant. That's how it should have been. "וּבֶאֱתָר הַקֹּהֵן וְהוֹצִיא אֹתוֹ" – And one of the servants was called to remove the ashes."

And so we must spend a little bit of time discussing the subject of *keniah*. It's a little bit of a diversion but it's important for our subject.

Duties of The Mind

There's a very valuable *sefer* that was written over 800 years ago in Spain by a Rabeinu Bechaya ben Yosef. It was written in Arabic and later it was translated into Hebrew as the *Chovos Halevovos*. In English its name is *Duties of the Heart* – it means the *Duties of the Mind*; in *lashon kodesh* the word *leiv* means the mind. And *kishmo kein hu* – it's called the *Duties of the Mind* because it teaches us the duties of a Jew; what he has to think in order to fulfill the obligations of his mind towards Hashem.

So you learned something very important now. Even if you went home right now it was worth the trip because you learned about a new *Shulchan Aruch* that you didn't know about. There's one *Shulchan Aruch* that you're familiar with already – it tells you all the duties that you have to do with your hands, sometimes with your feet. It tells you

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about the things you have to say with your mouth, the things you can eat and can't eat, the way to do kosher business and the way to do *mitzvos*.

Every good Jew has that *sefer* in his home – if you don't follow the Shulchan Aruch you're not a real Jew. But now you know that it's not everything because there are duties that have to do with your mind and they are also very important duties. And that's what this great book, the Chovos Halevovos discusses – it's your relationship with Hakodosh Boruch Hu in your own mind.

The Misplaced Chapter

Now, if you open up the *Chovos Halevovos* you'll see that he has there a big section called Sha'ar Hakeniah, The Gate of Humility. And to us that seems to be out of place in this book. Because *keniah* means humility and we know what humility means. Towards other people you're humble. You act decently towards them. You treat other people as equals. You honor them. You're careful with their feelings. You don't trample on them. You're not conceited. You're not arrogant towards them. That's what humility means.

And the truth is when you look in other *seforim* that deal with the subject, you'll see that they talk about being humble *bein adam lechaveiro*, between man and man. A man should be humble towards his wife. A wife should be humble towards her husband. Neighbors should be humble to each other. That's what humility means in all of the *seforim*.

So how does humility fit in in the *Chovos Halevovos* which is a *sefer* that deals with your relationship with Hashem? It's a *sefer* that specializes in our duties towards Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Where does "The Gate of Humility" come into such a book?

The Humble Rasha

And so we see that the *Chovos Halevovos* has an entirely different intention when he talks about humility. When he speaks about *keniah*, humility,

it's not in the sense of a man who is humble to other people. After all, even a *rasha gamur* can be humble when dealing with others.

Let's say the vice president of a bank. He has to hear complaints from the customers all the time – people call him up on the phone and complain; people come into his office, "What's this with my balance?!" Sometimes the most foolish complaints but if the vice president will say what he's thinking he'll lose business and so he learns how to be humble. It doesn't mean he gives everybody what they want but he's polite to everybody. Of course, as soon as you leave his office he'll have some choice words for you but he trained himself to be humble because that's his success.

Now, it could very well be that this humble vice-president doesn't even believe in Hashem. He believes in customers, in money, but where does Hashem come into it? It could be not at all. And so we see a man can be a *rasha* and still be an *anav*.

Humble To Hashem

And that's why the *Chovos Halevovos* doesn't speak about such humility. *Bein adam lechaveiro*, that kind of *anavah* is not the focus of the *Chovos Halevovos*; instead the Shaar Hakeniah is about becoming an *anav* towards Hashem.

So you'll say, "Well, that's easy. Who isn't humble to Hashem? To a customer, that takes work to humble myself, but to Hashem – what's the question?!" Unless *chas veshalom* he's an atheist; but a man who believes in the Creator, certainly is humble before Hashem. Who is there in the world who will be arrogant towards Hashem?

And the answer is everybody. That's the true answer. The truth is that every human being is arrogant towards Hashem! And even though with his lips he may say words of pious hypocrisy – "I bow down to You Hashem", "I am nothing before You" – but in his heart he is bowing down only to

himself. That's what's *amok*, *amok* inside him, that this world is too crowded for both of us.

Human Nature

That's what the Gemara says. What does Hakodosh Boruch Hu say about him? "אֵין אָנִי וְהוּא – יְכוּלִין לָדוֹר בְּעוֹלָם – *This man and I cannot live together in one world* (Sotah 5a). The universe is too small for both of us *because he wants to crowd Me out of the world*. "If he could," Hashem says, "he would swell himself up like a big balloon and fill up the whole space, the whole universe."

It's human nature. אֲנִי וְאֶפְסֵי עוֹד – *I'm what matters and nothing else* (Yeshaya 47:8). Every man! Even if you're a *tzaddik* and you *daven* and do *mitzvos*; you're serving Hashem all day long; no matter – as far as you're concerned you're still the most important person there is and even Hashem is imposing on you; He's crowding you.

And that's why a man must work on himself to be humble to Hashem. Even the *kohen*, the one who's working in the Beis Hamikdash all day long, he's commanded to change into other clothing – he takes off his *bigdei kehuna* and puts on his work clothes and he takes the dirty ashes out. That's what the Chovos Halevovos tells us about this mitzvah.

The Humble Priest

This mitzvah is given to the *kohen* because Hashem wants the perfection of a person – not only the *avodah*. The *korbanos* and the *zrikas hadam* and everything, very good; excellent. But it's nothing if it's not done with humility, with the awareness of Whom you're serving.

And so the *kohen* was obligated by Hashem every day in this menial task, to carry out the ashes, in order to humble himself and to remove the pride from his heart. Because as great as a person is – even if you're the *kohen* serving Hashem in the Beis Hamikdash – it's humility to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that is the greatest of all achievements. That's the true crown of an *eved Hashem*.

One of the great *kohanim* in our recent history was always practicing that. The Chofetz Chaim, he was already an old man, a tremendous servant of Hashem – he's famous for that – and they were carrying him, they were helping him from one place to another, and they heard him whispering under his breath; he said, "Shlep der neveilah, shlep der neveilah." "Pull the dead carcass," he said. He was reminding himself that he's nothing special.

Every little grain of *hachna'a* to Hashem is so valuable, it's such a perfection of character, that it's never enough. As much as you can you're reminding yourself that whatever you've accomplished, as great as you may be – and you are! – but before Hakodosh Boruch Hu you're humbled.

The Worm and The Wristwatch

That's why Dovid Hamelech spoke to himself all the time. וְאָנֹכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא אִישׁ – *I'm a worm and not a man* (Tehillim 22:7). It didn't matter if he was a little boy in the fields shepherding his father's sheep or the king of a nation sitting on his throne, he was always reminding himself, "I'm a little worm."

Now to imagine that you're a worm is difficult even for a nobody. Look at yourself as you're strolling in the street; you have a wristwatch, you have a fountain pen in your pocket, you're wearing eyeglasses. You have a purse with money, maybe a checkbook in your pocket. You're equipped with everything! Can you picture yourself like a worm, a caterpillar wending its way slowly across the sidewalk on which it fell? Dovid Hamelech put efforts into that and he succeeded.

Now we could say it – it's easy to say words; "Worm" and "neveilah" – it sounds so *frum*. But a person can say such things and in his heart he's so proud of himself, so arrogant, that he's saying such things. It needs a lot of work for us to really mean it because we're intoxicated, we're inebriated, we're drunk with arrogance, with self-importance.

But great men – and those who want to be great – work on themselves. They learn the lesson of the *terumas hadeshen* and look for ways to make themselves more and more humble. Because they understand that this is the great error, to forget that you're nothing before Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And therefore one of our big obligations in this world, one of the important duties of the mind, is to humble ourselves before the One who created us.

Part II. Perfection of Humility

Two Steps

Now, there's no question that whatever humility a person can gain is worthwhile. Even to be humble for one moment and be arrogant the rest of your life is also not a waste. That one moment, you have lived! It's a success! But we're talking now not about moments – we're talking now about gaining the quality of *anavah*. Ahh! To become someone who is *nichna* to Hashem; it's one of the highest achievements that the world can offer to mankind.

And so, let's listen to the words of our sages on this subject very carefully because they are the ones who can best guide us on the path to achieving that great quality. It's a statement in Shir Hashirim Rabah: **מִהַ שְׁעֵשְׂתָּה חֻכְמָה עֲטָרָה לְרֹאשָׁה עֲשׂוּתָהּ עֲנֹוה עֲקֹב לְסִלְיָתָהּ** - *What wisdom made as a crown for its head, humility has made a heel for its shoe.* In other words, when a person achieves the pinnacle, the crown of wisdom, that's where the quality of humility begins.

Now I want you to pay attention to what it's saying here because it's not merely a technicality; it's telling us the secret to achieving a feeling of *hachna'a* to Hashem. And it tells us that it's a process – first you have to achieve the crown of wisdom and only then can you begin being a true *anav*.

Defining the Crown

So the first thing we have to know is what is this “crown of wisdom”? What is the highest wisdom? And the answer is Awareness of Hashem. **רִאשִׁית חֻכְמָה** – *What is the highest degree of wisdom?* **יְרֵאתָ הַשֵּׁם** – *Awareness of Hashem* (Tehillim 111:10). Constant thinking about Hashem, that's *yiras Hashem*, and that constant Awareness is the crown of all wisdom.

Now it doesn't mean there's no other wisdom in the world, but this is the highest – whatever other wisdoms you might acquire in this world, the wisdom of Awareness of Hashem is higher than that. To recognize His greatness is an achievement of tremendous proportions! It's a crown you can be proud of!

Now, along comes our sages and they tell us something astonishing. That great achievement, that crown of wisdom called *yiras Hashem*, is only the beginning of something much greater. Awareness of Hashem is the heel of humility!

Become Aware

Now *yiras Hashem* is a very big subject on its own – if it's the crown of wisdom then it must be – but we're learning now that it's like climbing up a tall mountain. It takes work but finally you're there. You reached the summit! And now you see there's another mountain on top of this mountain. The top of the mountain is the bottom of another mountain, the mountain of perfection of *keniah*. And so another effort begins – now that you're aware of Hashem's greatness, now you're ready to be *nichna* to Him.

Once we begin to realize the greatness of Hashem, then we begin to realize how little we are in comparison. That's what we say: *Romemu Hashem Elokeinu* – *Raise up Hashem in our minds*; that's one thing; *vehishtachavu*, make yourself low, *shachah* means to bow down. It's not two different things; it's one thing – the more you raise up Hashem in your mind, the more humbled you feel.

And that's why it's paramount, it is of the greatest importance to get busy thinking about the greatness of Hashem – otherwise it's just words. A man has to understand that compared to Hakodosh Boruch Hu he is nothing and that means thinking about Him, talking about Him – becoming more and more aware of His presence.

And so we have to study the greatness of Hashem. We have to study and study. *Dor ledor yeshabach ma'asecha*, you have to talk about it with your children and what you learn from your father you have to add to and continue to talk about it always. To become aware of the greatness of Hashem – that's our job in life.

Spend the Five Minutes

Now don't say “that's superfluous”, don't say “we know all about it.” You *don't* know it. You don't *begin* to know it. I'll tell you why you don't begin to know it. You never put your mind on it. You never spend five minutes thinking about it.

You have to study. You have to study everything. Don't think you just have to study Torah alone. You have to study everything around in order to be aware of Hashem. It's remarkable how if a person opens his eyes and looks at nature, on all sides he sees plan and purpose. On all sides he can see the greatness of the Creator. And the more of His greatness you see, the more humbled you become.

A Majestic Crack

Now a man from here once told me he went to the Grand Canyon. He didn't ask me beforehand if he should go. He went. And when he returned he told me of his reaction. He said as he stood on the brink he was gasping at the majesty of the scene! He was amazed. It made a tremendous impression on him. Such a big crack in the surface of the earth!

But the truth is even that is nothing – it's only a crack! If you'd go up to the moon and look down, you'd see it's only a crack. You wouldn't see any canyon. It's only a crack in one little planet among

trillions. To Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it's nothing at all.

But the reason you have the Grand Canyon is because it's grand to us! That's the purpose of all of these creations. It makes you think of the greatness of the One who made them. That's what the Grand Canyon is for. That's what big mountains are for. And the big oceans and rivers. Imagine that you are De Soto with his followers, and you suddenly come upon the father of waters, the Mississippi. A tremendous river, the Mississippi. You climb up onto the bank and the river isn't obscured by anything. Your mind soars to the heights of inspiration. Such a tremendous river! A tremendous river like that must have a tremendous Creator.

Beneficial School Trips

Now, I'm not saying you should go to the Grand Canyon or the Mississippi River. It takes a lot of time to travel there – it's too much – but it would be worth it if you could do it, if you could just walk around the corner and take a good look at it. Even Niagara Falls is too much. When people ask me about a Beis Yaakov high school that takes their students on a trip to Niagara Falls, I don't like it. You have to travel so far, and spend so much money to see Niagara Falls?!

The truth is, it's only the *yetzer hora* that makes everyone dissatisfied with what they have right now. People who are really happy with what they have are almost impossible to find. They may say, “We're happy,” but they're not. And therefore, they're always seeking something else. And so, they travel to Niagara Falls. You might say differently, but I'm telling you, that's the reason why people travel to Niagara Falls. It's the *yetzer hora* that is making you dissatisfied. Of course, if you have a school so you yield a little bit to the *yetzer hora* in order that more girls should come to your school. You have an outing every year to get new *talmidos*, new students.

But really it's nothing. You won't find happiness there. You know when it's something? If you study it in order to become humbled before Hashem! I don't mean to just say "Ooh" and "Ahh." We're talking about filling our minds with Awareness of His infinite Greatness, His infinite Perfection and Power. It makes you gasp. It gives you a little respect for Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Because people think they're 'it'. You don't realize how nothing you are. And in order to counteract your *ga'avah* you have to see the *gedulas Hashem*.

Endless Space

And that's why He made the vastness of space. It's such an important understanding that it has to go with you wherever you go. You don't have to travel to Niagara Falls or the Mississippi River because wherever you are, you always have the vastness of space. You know the scientists say that there's no end to space. It's not true – everything in *gashmiyus* has an end – but it's almost endless. If you look through a telescope you see no end. When you look up and you see billions of miles, billions of light years, you can't calculate! The logarithm would come to an end because the space is so vast, so endless!

You know, if you started out in a space shuttle before you were *bar mitzvah* and you wanted to go to that star over there, before you get to the star you'll have a long white beard. You'll be an old, old man. That's how long it will take and you're not even halfway there yet.

Some of the places are so far away that your great-great-great-grandchild will not reach it yet even though your shuttle is traveling at the speed of light. You hear that? That's how far away it is. It's as far as you could imagine.

Meet The Little Nobody

Yeshaya Hanavi (40:26) says: **שָׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם** – *Lift up your eyes on high*, **וּרְאוּ מִי בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים** – *and see Who made these*. You hear that mitzvah from the Navi Yeshaya?! Pick up your head and look up to

the sky and become aware of the Creator! From the greatness of space you get somewhat of an idea of the greatness of the One who made it. It helps you understand a little bit because really the whole universe – you know what it is? I'll give a little *mashal* and it's not true either. It's too little but I'll say it anyhow. The whole universe, the trillions and trillions of miles, is one blood corpuscle in the veins, *kavayochol*, of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The whole universe, from one end to the other, if there is an end, it could be one little corpuscle in the body, *kavayochol*, of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Of course He doesn't have a body but it's a *mashal* – the almost never ending greatness of space is nothing compared to the greatness of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And Yeshaya is telling us that it was made that way to help you understand the greatness of the One who created it all. You hear that?! Those billions and trillions of miles into nowhere, those trillions of stars, were created for you, to humble you. And therefore the thinking person looks up into the sky all the time and he's *nichna*. You never did that? Try it out once. When nobody's looking, raise up your eyes and say, "Look how far that is! It's so vast! And that's just the little handiwork, the plaything, of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And therefore who am I before Him? I'm a little nobody."

Part III. Four Aspects of Humility

Let's Get Practical

Now, as I say these words I realize that there are people who listen to such things with reservations. If you go outside you'll find those who poo-poo such things. And I don't blame people because nobody is willy-nilly going to allow himself to be persuaded to spend his life recognizing Hashem. He should be looking up at the sky all the time and making himself small?! He has his own business to achieve. He is willing to give a little bit of *maaser* or a little less than *maaser*

in recognizing Hashem; something yes, but he wants to live his normal life.

But we're learning now that this is the most normal life you can live – to be aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu to the extent where you're actually *nichna* to Him; you feel an actual tangible feeling of "I'm standing before Him and therefore I'm nothing;" that's the best way to live because there's nothing more true than that.

Now, although it's very important to spend a little time every day on this subject of *keniah* to Hakodosh Boruch Hu—as much as possible to try and spend a few minutes a day meditating on His greatness and utilizing that Awareness as a stimulus to *keniah*—but since it's a matter of intelligence and thinking it's not so easy to attain, therefore any kind of stimulant that will actually help you become an *anav* should be utilized. To be *nichna* to Hashem is such a valuable achievement that we should grab onto any opportunity that presents itself.

Seven Effective Actions

And that's why in the fourth *perek* of Sha'ar Hakeniah the *mechaber* tells us there are seven ways in which a person has to behave as a result of *keniah*. Now, I say 'as a result of' but really it's more than that because the more you practice these things the more you will become humble.

That's an important rule! **הָאָדָם נִפְעָל לְפִי פְעֻלוֹתָיו** – *A person will be affected according to his actions.* And therefore whether you're a man who is truly humble, or even if you're not so genuine but you want to be, you can make use of the following practices. And by practicing up with these behaviors as much as possible, they become exercises in humility – you build up your *keniah* muscles

Now, we won't have time for all seven and even the ones we discuss need a lot more explanation but we'll talk about some of the ways that a person can utilize opportunities in daily life

in order to activate this middah of *keniah* – it's a good beginning.

A Humble Attitude

Number one is **בְּמִשְׁאָלוֹ וּמִתְנוּ עִם אֲנָשֵׁי דוֹרוֹ** – *the way he deals with and behaves with other people,* **וּבְמִנְהַג הַטּוֹב עִם בְּנֵי מֵינּוֹ** – *and how proper is his behavior towards other human beings.* It means that a person who doesn't treat other people right, it's a sign he's not *nichna* to Hakodosh Boruch Hu – yes, to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The Chovos Halevovos quotes the *possuk* (Tehillim 15:4), **נִבְיָה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאָס** – *He considers himself unimportant in his own eyes.* It doesn't mean he is unimportant but in his own eyes, when he knows that he's standing in front of the vast greatness of Hashem, he automatically feels humbled; and therefore when he deals with people – no matter who – he acts like he's an unimportant person.

And therefore if he's an *anav* or if he's trying to activate and exercise his *keniah* muscles, he won't get angry at people; he won't give orders to people. He won't look down at people; he won't be stubborn and insist on having his own way. He's unimportant after all. He's standing in the Presence of Hashem! All good *middos bein adam lachaveiro* follow as a result of that. And so he speaks gently to all people. He's kind. He is *mivateir*. He becomes a person of good character towards his fellow man.

Now that however needs a great deal of explanation – and it's worth the explanation – how a true *anav* should behave towards other people, towards his wife, his neighbors, towards his employees, towards his employer; in general to people. He's *nichna* to everyone because he's *nichna* to Hashem. As much as we can, we practice up on being *nichna* before Hakodosh Boruch Hu in our dealings with other people.

Accept Instruction

The second of the forms of behavior which distinguish somebody who is humble before Hashem is *בְּשִׁפְיָנָה בְּרַעְיֵת אֱלוּקִים וְתוֹרָתוֹ* – when he encounters *chachomim* who know the Torah and the ways of the Torah. When he has the opportunity to come in contact with those who are close to Hashem, he behaves towards them with humility and he opens up his ears to their instruction.

Like it says (Mishlei 14:19), *שָׁחוּ רַעִים לְפָנֵי טוֹבִים* – the less good ones should lower before the better ones. Before people of higher caliber in knowing Hashem and His ways, he makes himself humble. When he meets people who are superior, he acknowledges it. Whether they're bigger *lamdonim* or more pious than him, he's humbled before them and welcomes guidance from them because he knows that they know what they're talking about.

Critical Daas Torah

Let's say if a *tzaddik* calls you up and says, "R' Chaim. I want to talk to you about your behavior."

So you don't say, "My behavior? What's the matter?"

No, no. If your *rebbe* is calling you, you have to listen. You lower yourself before him. "Yes, Rebbi, please tell me, what is it?"

He says "I hear that you're not polite to your wife. Your wife complains. You go into the kitchen and you stick your nose into the pots and the cabinets and you criticize and you belittle her all the time. What business do you have in the kitchen? Does she go to your store, to the office, and tell you what to do?"

So you listen and you say "Yes Rebbi, I'm *mekabel*." Even if you don't understand. That's how you should be. Even though you may not understand what he's saying, you're humble towards him.

So if you react favorably, properly to good people, to *tzaddikim* and *talmidei chachomim* and

you accept what they say, you listen, then that's a sign you're an *anav*. That's a sign you're *nichna* to Hashem because they're not telling you their own opinion. They're telling you *da'as Torah*. They're telling you the *ratzon Hashem*.

Humble Before Praise

A third sign of an *anav* is that when someone will praise this man with his good qualities, *חֵיב לִיבְנָה* – it's his duty to become humbled as a result. When people praise him for his good *middos*, when they say "What a good character you have," or "We hear good things about you," that itself should be a stimulus towards even more *hachna'a*. How is that?

Here's a man and they're praising him; let's say they make him the guest of honor and they're praising him. What does he do? He knows in his mind all the things that he once did, things that he still does. *וַיַּעֲבֹר עַל לְבוֹ* – And he's reviewing them in his mind at that moment. And he's thinking, "How can I rejoice just because people are making a mistake in me. I'm sorry, I'm in mourning because Hakodosh Boruch Hu knows the truth. He knows how wrong my deeds are. He knows how I have neglected to pay my obligations to Hashem."

Stinging Praise

It's important for people when they're being praised not to be ruined by the praise because it can lead them astray, it could twist their minds and make them think, "Look people are saying it so it's a sign that it's true." No it's not a sign at all! It's an opportunity! And therefore when such a time comes he should utilize that opportunity to think just the opposite; what he really knows about himself.

And therefore when he's being praised, on the street, even the littlest praise, right away he's thinking to himself about his faults that people don't know about. In his heart he makes himself humbled and he thinks, "Do they know what bad things I did that Hakodosh Boruch Hu helped to

conceal from them? He has pity on me and he covered them up so that people shouldn't know, to give me a chance I should repent.”

And he shouldn't be happy that people have an error in him and think that he's a good man; instead he should be sad because Hashem *does* know. And therefore the more people praise him, the more he becomes *nichna* and humbled. He's being praised but he's thinking about how his deeds are wrong and how he neglects to pay his obligations to Hashem for the benefits that he does to him. That's the third sign of somebody who is *nichna* to Hashem. Isn't that beautiful?

Humble Before Criticism

And the fourth – I wish we had more time together to speak about these exercises at greater length – the fourth exercise of the Chovos Halevavos is, **בְּשִׁמְסֻפְרִים בְּגִנּוּתוֹ** – *When people speak about your faults,* **יִכְנַע לְבוֹרֵא** – *you should take that opportunity to humble yourself to the Borei.* He should be humbled to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, **וַיֹּדֶה לוֹ מֵעַט מֵהַרְבֵּה** – *and He should thank Him that at least a little bit was now revealed to him, a little bit of the much more that should have been revealed.* Hakodosh Boruch Hu was kind to him and revealed a little something, **בְּרִי לְיִסְרוֹ** – *in order to chastise him and criticize him,* **וּלְהוֹכִיחוֹ** – *in order to chastise him and criticize him,* **בְּרִי שְׂיָשׁוּב לוֹ** – *in order that he should turn back to Hashem.*

That's the way an *eved Hashem* reacts to criticism – he should be *nichna* and say, “This was sent to me in order I should do *teshuvah* and become better and better.” When somebody speaks against him, somebody criticizes him, people say something against him, they talk *loshon hara* about him, he should be humble to the Borei and he should thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu that He revealed to these people only a little bit of the truth about him.

Your Wife's Generosity

And so if somebody says “You're a rotten fellow,” revel in that opportunity. It doesn't mean you have to admit it; you have the right to protect yourself, but you should understand that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is sending you a message. Get better. Do *teshuvah*. Maybe it's true – everyone has some rot in them after all.

If you remind yourself that you're standing in front of Hashem so you'll thank Him for that. It's a gift *min hashomayim*. At least somebody is telling you the truth. Nobody wants to tell you the truth about yourself. Nobody cares about you enough. You can't find anybody. And here is one person who's willing to tell you the truth.

And therefore if it does happen that you have the good luck that somebody criticizes you – your wife is probably generous enough to give you some criticism from time to time, you should listen carefully. If your wife tells you you're no good – by the way, you should never say it to your husband because the more you tell him he's no good the worse he becomes. You should always tell your husband how nice he is! But suppose a wife made a mistake and she told you the truth “you're no good”, she tells you something wrong about yourself, so don't just be angry and answer back. Listen! It could be true. You have to say to yourself “Boruch Hashem, she doesn't know how no good I really am.”

Available Opportunities

Now there are a few more there in the Chovos Halevavos – you can take a look on your own; it's *perek daled* in Shaar Hakeniah – but we're out of time and so we'll have to stop here for tonight. Anyhow, there's enough here for us to make use of, to practice up as we make our way through this world. These opportunities are available all the time, only that we have to put our heads towards noticing them and making use of them.

And by means of practicing up these methods whenever the opportunity comes your way and at the same time you're climbing the mountain of *yiras Hashem* – you're becoming more and more aware of the greatness of the Borei by looking at the remarkable plan and purpose in nature; you look up at the sky all the time and you're convinced more and more of His greatness – so little by little, **מִי יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר הַשָּׁמַיִם** – you're going to ascend this mountain of Awareness of Hashem and begin to climb the mountain of humility as well. And you'll spend your life climbing to perfection because the closer you get, the more aware you are of Hashem and the more you're humbled before Him. And the more you are *nichna* before Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that's the perfection of Man in this world.

Now I'm just beginning my subject. I'm sorry I didn't even begin. I'm on the first few lines of the subject, but it's a subject that's very important. Every day, every day try to improve yourself a little bit more and that's going to be the way that'll lead you to the final success, the *shleimus* for which you were created.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Gaining True Humility

The Torah teaches us that we can never be too humble in the Presence of Hashem. Even the priest must lower himself and perform menial tasks in the house of Hashem. True humility comes from recognizing the greatness of Hashem and our lowliness. This week I will *bli neder* spend twenty seconds a day contemplating the greatness of creation and its Creator, as a way of attaining *Yiras Hashem* and *Anavah*.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

C-54 - (Chovos Halevovos) | 429 - Humility to Hashem

588 - Seven Aspects of Humility | 614 - The Sukkah

664 - Perfection of Humility | 702 - The Humble People

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

How are we really supposed to see the *neis* of Purim if it was a *neis nistar* that was hidden in the natural events?

A:

The answer is that sometimes a thing can be so startling that you just can't hide it. The American government is carrying out nuclear tests – nuclear explosions – and they're trying to hide it, but the scientists who have the proper instruments know what's going on, and they can tell you the details where it's going on and when. And your mind is your instrument. With a little bit of thought, you see the Hand of Hashem.

You can't hide certain things. And when Haman, who was the king's favorite, is now not only not a favorite, but he's wiped out – and not only that, but the one who took his place was the least likely person, so even the biggest dumbbell could guess Who is to blame for all this. **יֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק** – “The One who dwells in Heaven is laughing.” Hakodosh Boruch Hu was playing the joke and everybody could see it.

And therefore **וּרְאוּ אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ** – “All the ends of the world saw that it was a salvation from Hashem.” It was very clear to everyone. Only that if you don't put your mind to it, you don't see anything and you'll remain the same person you were last Purim, and the year before that, and the year before that. But the wise person will use his Purim to see how Hashem is doing everything for the Am Yisroel, and he'll fall in love with Hashem. Because the person who is the same person on the day after Purim as he was the day before Purim, has wasted a tremendous opportunity.

TAPE # 110