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SEFER SHEMOS - IN MEMORY OF R' SRULY MILLER A"H

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

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SEFER SHEMOS

IN MEMORY OF **R' SRULY MILLER A"H**

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Year 4 | Issue 16

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פרשת שמות

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Ladder of Gratitude

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Part I. Real Appreciation

The Forgetful King

Only a few years after Yosef passed away a surprising thing occurred: וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף – A new king arose in Mitzrayim who did not know Yosef (Shemos 1:8). Now such a possuk is quite puzzling. More than puzzling, it seems almost unbelievable. Could such a thing be true? Could it be that the king of Mitzrayim would forget the man who had reigned as vice-monarch for eighty years, the man who had saved his country from the worst famine in the country's history?

You have to know that Mitzrayim was a civilized nation; they kept historical records and nothing was forgotten. You remember when Pharaoh gave Yaakov Avinu and his children the best land in Mitzrayim to live on? The Pharaohs never took back that promise. Despite all the succeeding dynasties that ruled in Mitzrayim, Eretz Goshen was never taken away from the family of their savior. For eighty years Yosef had

been in charge of the country and he had done tremendous things for the land. Nobody could forget that!

And so our sages tell us that the truth is that these words “*asher lo yoda es Yosef*” are not to be understood in the most literal sense. Pharaoh knew Yosef very well! If you would have pulled Pharaoh over into a private corner somewhere in the palace and asked him, “Don’t you remember Yosef?” he would have told you, “Of course I remember Yosef! What he did for us! Who could forget him? But the Bnei Yisroel are increasing at unprecedented rates. There are simply too many of them and *something* I must do.” And therefore, **עָשָׂה אֶת עֲצָמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ לֹא יָדַע** – *Pharaoh behaved like he didn’t know*. He knew Yosef; only that he didn’t show it. He made it as if he didn’t know him, as if he forgot what Yosef had meant for Mitzrayim.

Stoning the Statue

Now, about our *possuk* the *medrash* says as follows: **מִשָּׁל לְאַחַד שָׂרָגִים** – *It’s like the story of a certain man who was throwing stones at the statue of the governor*. That’s how it was in those days; every city built a statue in honor of the one who had built up the city and supported the residents. But this man was upset at the governor for some reason and so he walked into the city square and began throwing rocks at the statue. **אֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ** – *As soon as the king heard about what happened he said*, **הַתִּיזוּ אֶת רִאשׁוֹ** – *“Take off that man’s head right now!* **שֶׁלְמָחֹר יַעֲשֶׂה בִּי כֵךְ** – *Because if you’ll let him live, tomorrow he’ll do the same thing to me.”*

The *medrash* is telling us that the same thing happened with Pharaoh. Pharaoh acted like he didn’t know – he knew Yosef but he wasn’t grateful to him at all. “Yosef? Certainly he helped us, but what type of gratitude should I feel already? What happened, happened.”

“Oooh,” said Hashem, “If you can be a *kafui tov*, a denier of good that a person bestows on you, then you’re never going to recognize what Hashem does for you. A man who can throw stones at Yosef will surely throw stones at Me. There’ll come a time when the one who said, ‘I don’t know Yosef,’ he’ll say, **לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת הָשֵׁם** – ‘I don’t know Hashem either.’” That’s what happened eventually. Eventually, when Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh, he said “Who is Hashem? I never heard of Him” (Shemos 5:2).

Denying the Benefits

There’s an important principle that’s involved here and our sages describe it as follows: **כָּל הַכּוֹפֵר בְּטוֹבָתוֹ שֶׁל חֲבֵרוֹ** – *If someone denies gratitude*

for a benefit that his fellowman bestowed upon him, לְבִסּוֹף כּוֹפֵר בְּטוֹבָתוֹ שֶׁל, מְקוֹם – he will end up denying any benefits that he received from Hashem. That's always the end of a man who doesn't recognize his fellow; he won't recognize Hashem either.

It's impossible otherwise. If you are not capable of being grateful to a person who is standing before you, a *basar v'dam* who you see with your own eyes, then you can forget about being grateful to Hashem. It just can't be any other way. You can say the words, you can speak about recognizing Hashem and thanking Hashem, you can say beautiful words, but sincere gratitude to Hashem is actually very far from your mind.

Now, our sages are telling us this principle because it applies to ourselves. We're not so concerned about Pharaoh after all and therefore we'll leave him for a moment and we'll talk about our own lives. Here's a yeshiva boy sitting at the dinner table – let's say your mother made supper for you tonight. When she brought you a bowl of soup and some chicken and rice, did you say thank you to your mother? Did you appreciate what she did for you? It took time to prepare that supper. She was slaving away over the stove for a long time.

Appreciating the Apple

Not only supper! Did you ever make a *cheshbon* of how many steps your mother took in the house today for you? Back and forth, back and forth, up the stairs, down the stairs, in the kitchen, back and forth, back and forth; your mother walks miles for you. Did you say thank you to your mother for all of those steps she took for you? It doesn't even enter your mind!

And let's say at the end of supper, your mother said to you, "My child, *farbeis* an apple for desert." So maybe you grumbled. "Just a plain apple?! Where is the ice cream custard or some other desert? That's all she's offering me? An apple?!"

But let's say you didn't complain – you were big enough to keep your feelings closed up within you and you took it begrudgingly. But gratitude? To say a hearty, "Thank you, Mother"? It doesn't even enter your mind! You think you're doing your mother a favor by taking her apple, so what's there to thank for already.

But you're a very *frum* boy so you said, "*Boruch atah Hashem ... borei pri ha'eitz.*" "Oh yes," you'll say, "when it comes to the Creator, how can I ignore the fact that He creates food? Certainly I recognize the hand of the Creator! *Boruch atah* – I thank You Hashem for creating the fruit of the tree for me to eat." And as soon as you finish eating, now you *really*

get busy! You're a very frum boy so you're going to say now *birkas hamazon* with *hislavhos*. And it takes time too; it's four long *brachos*.

Real Appreciation

But we're learning now that it's empty words; it's just words with a *niggun*. Of course you have to say it anyway – you have no choice; it's a *mitzvah di'oraisah* and you'll get your reward – but you have to know that it's just a formality. It's meaningless, absolutely meaningless. Even if you're thinking what you're saying, it's just empty words because if you're *koifer b'toivosos shel chavairo*, if you're capable of denying the benefits that your mother gave you, *lb'sof kofeir b'tovaso shel Makom*, then you're undoubtedly denying the benefits Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving you.

And it's not just your mother. Did you ever thank your father for working all day long? He's paying for your *schar limud*. You're still in the *yeshiva* and he's paying for it. So you'll say, "He has to pay – he's my father." Why does he have to pay? He wants to learn himself. Why can't you go to work and let *him* sit and learn?! He's working all day in the office so you can eat and have a place to live. You never thought of thanking your father?! Well, you should know then that you'll never be able to thank Hashem! כָּל הַכּוֹפֵּר בְּטוֹבוֹתוֹ שֶׁל חֵבֶרֶד – *If you withhold gratitude for a benefit that your fellow man bestows upon you*, לְבַסּוֹף כּוֹפֵּר בְּטוֹבוֹתוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם – *you'll end up denying any benefits that you received from Hashem*. That's the forgone conclusion of a man who doesn't recognize his fellow; he won't recognize Hashem either. It's impossible otherwise.

Gratitude For What You See

Now, the reason this is true is because it's much easier to be truly grateful to a human being than be grateful to Hashem. It's easier to be grateful to someone you see. You see your husband after all. You see that he's working all day long in the office in Manhattan to support the family. You see that he comes home at the end of the week with the paycheck to pay the bills. Your wife too. You see your wife. You see she's cooking for you. You see she's raising your family. You see that you have clean shirts and clean underwear because of her. You see that she's doing all these things.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu on the other hand is רֹאֶה וְאֵינוֹ נִרְאֶה – *He sees us but we don't see Him*. Of course, we know that He's the truth of the world, that He's the only true existence, but no matter, it's not so easy to feel gratitude towards an idea. How can you be sincerely grateful to something you subscribe to merely by means of *emunah*? A fellow *basar va'dam*, you

don't need any *emunah*! A person that has done something of benefit to you is not an ideal – it's an actual person.

Real Gratitude

Of course, if gratitude means just saying some words, then it's all the same; it's all empty words. But we're talking about sincere gratitude now, about appreciating what people are doing for you and feeling indebted to the one bestowing upon you good things. We're talking now about looking your mother in the eye with a smile and say "Thank you so much Ma, I really appreciate it!"

And therefore if you're thanking Hakodosh Boruch Hu but you're not thanking the people around you, it's nothing but an externality. You had no intention of gratitude because if you deny your fellowman's benefits, you're surely denying the benefits that Hashem gives you. That's what the *medrash* is teaching us. It's a fundamental corruption of character when you fail to cultivate that *middah* of gratitude towards those around you because only as much as you have developed that attitude of gratitude to the people in your life, will you be a sincere *makir tov* to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Part II. Appreciating People

An Inborn Attitude

Now, the truth is that the attitude of gratitude is inherent in all human beings. And that's because from the beginning of creation Hakodosh Boruch Hu implanted in Mankind all good qualities of character. **וַיְפֹחַ בְּאַפָּיו נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים** – *The Creator breathed into a man's nostrils the spirit of life* (Bereishis 2:7). Now, that sentence is so important that we should talk for forty years on that one subject; I'm not exaggerating! Because who breathed into Man's nostrils? Hashem! And **מִמֶּנִּי יִנְּפֹחַ מְדִילָה נְפֹחַ** – *if somebody breathes, he breaths from himself*. So it means Hashem breathed into Mankind something of Himself – there is in Mankind something of Hashem.

Now, I don't know what Hashem is and nobody else does either and therefore nobody can describe exactly what He breathed into Man; but because we know that Hashem didn't breathe into the nostrils of horses or cows and rabbits so you must say this procedure was something beyond the mere gift of life. Hashem breathed into man the soul, the *nishmas chayim*.

The Ramban says that at that time Man became endowed with infinite wisdom, a bottomless and profound knowledge. But not only wisdom in the sense of knowing things; all of the wisdom of correct traits of character, all the matters of conscience of right and wrong, lie concealed in the depths of the human soul. And included in that is the quality of gratitude; *hakoras hatov* is part of our subconscious existence.

Even The Atheists

That's why all over the world, wherever you go, people expect others to demonstrate gratitude. Even Communists, atheists, are outraged when they bestow some benefit upon you without hearing an expression of thanks. Let's say a college professor; he believes that a man is descended from algae. Now the algae doesn't have any qualms about ingratitude. And yet this college professor is outraged, he has an instinctive indignation at people who don't appreciate what he does for them.

Now if you would question him, "Why should we have any more scruples than algae? After all according to your own teachings we are merely the result of accidents and development, and therefore all these things – gratitude, honesty, decency – are merely figments of imagination according to you; they're imaginary social structures. So why should we be obligated?" But despite all the theories, although he doesn't believe in anything, the professor is still influenced by his non-evolutionist mother. He still believes in the innate decency of gratitude because he can't escape the inherent traits of character in every man's soul. And that includes the basic decency of feeling thankful and indebted to anyone who does even the smallest favor to you.

Gratitude Goes Lost

And yet, despite this truth, as natural and innate as the quality of gratitude really is, we see there's a dichotomy here between theory and actual practice. We can say it, we can believe it, we can expect it, but where is it? Look around! We see that in practice it's lacking. Certainly, people are not as grateful as they should be. And yet, it's a question – how could such a thing be? What happened to the *nishmas chayim* that Hakodosh Boruch Hu breathed into all of us that includes this fundamental attitude of gratitude?

And the answer is that there is a strong burden of habit that chains our mind and does not permit us to appreciate the elementary principle of gratitude to our benefactors. A child who grows up in a house whose parents from the beginning fed and clothed him and housed him, does it occur to him to feel gratitude to his parents because they supplied a

home for him? It doesn't enter his mind because he expects it – that's how it's supposed to be, he thinks. And it could be he will never think about it all his life. He will never look back with gratitude to the fact that his parents paid rent for him. If he didn't exist, the apartment could have been smaller; his parents would have been paying less rent. It costs a lot of money to raise a child.

But it doesn't occur to you because you're a prisoner of habit. The force of habit, of being born into a world where everyone was constantly bestowing benefits upon you, has blinded you to the tremendous responsibility of gratitude.

Departmentalizing Character

And yet there's something worse than the fact that you don't appreciate what your parents or your fellow man does for you. That's only a *halbe tzarah*. Even more serious than not being *makir tov* to those around you is what results from that. Such an attitude fundamentally means that you're not thankful to Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself!

If we are not capable of recognizing what a father and a mother did for us despite the open manifestations of their kindness and their concern for us – if despite their open signs of love and devotion and self sacrifice it doesn't begin to enter the child's mind that there's any debt of gratitude, then that person remains blind to the most fundamental phenomenon of the universe and that is the necessity to be grateful to Hakodosh Boruch Hu who is actually the One supplying us with everything.

That's what the Torah is teaching us here: If you're going to be a *kafui tov* to your fellow man, then you'll be a *kafui tov* to Hakodosh Boruch Hu because it's impossible for a person to departmentalize his character.

If a man is crooked in his *middos*, then *everything* he does is going to be with the crooked *middos* because the *middos* of character expand in every direction. You cannot be different than you actually are and therefore you deal with Hakodosh Boruch Hu with the same set of character traits that you deal with human beings. It just can't be helped – when a man is deficient in his conduct towards his fellowman, we know that he's deficient in his conduct with Hashem.

There's No Separation

If you think that you can separate between your behavior to your parents or spouse or your neighbors and your behavior to Hashem, you're living your entire life with *sheker*. You think it's two different departments:

“Hashem! Ooooh! I recognize what Hashem does for me! It could be I’m deficient when it comes to my gratitude to people; could be, but that has nothing to do with my religiosity. I’m thankful to Hashem! And I’m dedicated to Him because of my gratitude, no question about that!”

It’s not true! And even if he talks to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and he says *boruch atah, boruch atah* all day long, it’s impossible that it should be sincere. It’s a sham! You don’t think He’s doing much for you at all.

Like once a young man – a *frum* boy – asked me, “Why should I be grateful to Hashem?” I took a look at him. He wasn’t wearing crutches. He didn’t have braces on his feet. He didn’t have a brace to hold his neck up. He didn’t have false teeth. He looked to be well nourished. He didn’t seem to have slept last night on the park bench either. And he was clothed – he wasn’t walking naked. And he wants to know why he should be grateful to Hakodosh Boruch Hu! Well, there’s a lot to talk about if that’s the case. And I’m afraid that most of us here tonight, even though we’re polite enough not to say that, but in our heart we’re thinking the same thing.

Before Torah

And so, when you start a career of being a servant of Hashem – that’s what we all want to be after all; Hashem said to us, “You are my servants,” and we’re happy that we were chosen for that role – you must have some training. And the first thing therefore is, *דָּרֵךְ אֲרֶץ קִדְמָה לַתּוֹרָה* – *Good manners comes before Torah*. Good manners, that’s something everyone can understand. But what ‘good manners’ means, however, that’s a question. And the answer is that good manners doesn’t just mean proper etiquette; it means the correct qualities of character. That’s the *hakdama*, the foundation of *avodas Hashem*, because to sincerely react decently to Hashem, you must react properly to human beings.

In his *hakdamah* to *Shaar Avodas Elokim* the *Chovos Halvovos* expands on this idea. He says there that the *regesh* of *hakaras hatov l’bosor v’dom*, the emotion of gratitude towards people, that’s the ladder by which we ascend to recognizing the benefits in having gratitude towards Hashem. If you begin practicing up on people, that’s the way to start climbing the ladder towards perfection in serving Hashem out of gratitude.

Ascending the Ladder

You’re hearing a very important point now. The *Chovos Halvovos* teaches us that the greatest form of service of Hashem is serving Him out of sincere gratitude and he’s telling us here that the ladder that one

ascends towards gratitude to Hashem is made up of rungs of being grateful to human beings. Gratitude to the people around you – that's how a person uses his life to climb higher to Hashem. You can't climb a ladder unless the first rung is there; if the first rung is missing, you can't go to the second rung. And so, if you want to get busy making something out of yourself, always remember that the first steps on the *sulam* are rungs of gratitude. Not gratitude to Hashem – to people.

So you start with your parents and little by little you go higher and higher! When your mother gives you breakfast in the morning you should generate a feeling of gratitude to her and say thank you. Even if you don't say it you should surely feel gratitude for what she's given you.

Your mother is the first step on the rung. If you say, "Thank you, mother" when she gives you supper; *then* you can think about *birchas hamazon*. *Bentching* is one step higher. That's how you climb; one step and then another and then another; that's how you climb the ladder of Hashem's service. *Hukash kvodam likvod Hamakom*, say Chazal. *Honoring your parents is like honoring Hashem* (Bava Metzia 32a) because it prepares you for honoring Hashem.

Thanks to Everyone

Not only your parents. Say thank you to your *rebbe*s. Say thank you to the colored man driving the city bus. Say thank you to the bus driver who brought you to the yeshiva. You never thought about that, did you? When you get on the bus to go to school you should feel gratitude to the driver who is taking you. It would do no harm if you said thank you. He'll be surprised – don't tell him while he's driving; he might faint!

Then, when your *rebbe* teaches you, you should feel grateful to him for teaching you Torah. You should feel grateful that the yeshiva building is comfortable and warm; you should feel grateful to the janitor who takes care of the furnace. Say thank you to the janitor; no harm.

And even when you go to the shoemaker and you pay him for putting taps on your heels, you have to thank him. Without those taps, soon you would be walking barefoot. And don't just say empty words. Think about it for a few seconds and then say thank you. You go to the grocer; he sells you groceries and you give him only money. He can't eat the money, but you can eat the food. The baker too – did you ever say thank you? Certainly you must say thank you, even if you're paying for it.

And so when you start saying thank you to your mother, thank you to your father, your *rebbe*, your neighbor, the mailman, the bus driver – not just saying thank you but thinking about the benefits you're getting

from each one – so you've started on your career of serving Hashem. By doing that, you're getting ready to thank the Borei; you're preparing yourself to actually feel gratitude to the One who causes everything to happen.

Part III. Appreciating Hashem

Guard Your Tongue

We're learning now that we cannot compartmentalize our attitudes; our attitudes towards Hashem are a direct outgrowth of our attitudes to our fellows. And that brings us to a remarkable statement of Chazal.

Everybody knows that there's an *issur* to speak against your fellow man. It's forbidden by the Torah: **לֹא תֵלֵךְ רֵכִיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ** – *You shouldn't go around spreading words about your fellowman*. Even if it's true, don't say anything against your fellowman's reputation! And it's reiterated so often; **נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֶה מָרֵעַ** – *Guard your tongue against evil*; we see that it's certainly a wicked practice.

That's why you must be very careful when you approach the telephone. It's a dangerous instrument and it must be used with discretion! And when you sit and talk with other people, the best thing is not to participate – just listen and keep your mouth shut because **כָּל הַמְדַבֵּר וְדָבָרִים מְבִיא חַטָּא** – *the more you talk, the more sure you are to sin* (Avos 1:17). There is no doubt that the man who knocks other people is a sinner.

Not Just Another Sin

But we find something else, something surprising that our sages tell us about this man; he's much more than just a sinner: **כָּל הַמְסַפֵּר לְשׁוֹן הָרַע** – *Anybody who speaks loshon hara it's as if he denies Hakodosh Boruch Hu* (Arachin 15b). It means it's considered as if he's slandering Hakodosh Boruch Hu!

So the question is, why should that be? Yes, it's true, he's a *baal loshon hara*; he's sinning by talking against people. But after all, that's all it is; it's *bein adam l'chaveiro* – it's a sin between man and man. Where does Hakodosh Boruch Hu come into the picture? Is he talking against Hakodosh Boruch Hu? Surely this man after he finished talking – let's say in preparation for *davening*, he said a little *loshon hara* before *brachos* – but now he's ready to sing *shira*; he puts on his *tallis* and *tefillin* and now he's ready to go! His neighbor who walks on his lawn, *that's* who he

doesn't like, but for Hashem, he's full of praises! For Him he has nothing but admiration. It wouldn't even enter his mind to say anything against Hashem. *Chas v'Shalom!*

So we say, no, it's not so. Because once man gets into the habit of fault finding, of looking for *chesronos* and criticizing people, he'll be criticizing Hashem too; a person who is careless in speaking about his fellowman, you must know this man is going to speak ill of his Creator.

Complaints and Criticisms

He may not say it; he may be afraid to say it but in his mind he's full of dissatisfaction with everything that Hashem did for him. And he talks *loshon hora* against Him: "Why did this happen to me?" he says. "Why didn't I have more success? Why did I lose money in this-and-this transaction?" And he feels that the blame falls on Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He won't say it, but you have to know subconsciously he is blaming Hashem.

Again and again, we see people who are criticizing Hashem and belittling Him. You want to see it? Walk outside in the wintertime you'll find two old ladies are standing and talking. "What nasty weather! All that dirty snow!"

You know what snow is? Snow turns into water and water turns into fruits because all of that the moisture of the slowly melting snow goes into the earth. The farmers say that when there's not enough snow the crops will not grow well next summer because the earth needs moisture and it's the snow of winter that stores up moisture in the ground. Is that something to complain about? But that's how it is, if you're a complainer, you'll complain about everything.

The Complainer

That's why it says in Mishlei (16:28) וְנִרְגַּן מִפְּרִיד אֱלֹוִי – *A complainer separates friends from himself*. Nobody likes a complainer. A husband who complains, his wife won't like him. His children won't like him. A wife who complains, a mother who complains, she's not liked. Anybody who's a complainer should know he's not popular. People don't like to hear complainers and therefore *mafrid aluf*, you lose friends.

But our sages go on and explain the *possuk* with one more step. Pay attention: The *gemara* says, אֵין אֱלֹוִי אֶלָּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא – The word *aluf*, friend, is talking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu too. The complainer loses all friends and after a while he loses his most loyal Friend, his best Friend;

he loses Hashem. The end is, Hakodosh Boruch Hu becomes tired of him; He can't take him anymore. Hashem stops being his friend.

"Oh! But I'm not angry at you, Hashem," he'll say, "I don't mean to complain against You!" Nothing doing! וְנִרְגַּן מִפְּרִיד אֱלֹהִי – You're losing your Best Friend! When a person complains, Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "You're complaining against Me too. You're dissatisfied and it's impossible to be dissatisfied with man and not be dissatisfied with Me." Don't think you're blaming only people, only circumstances. No! It's impossible to separate!

Everything Is Very Good

"You're never going to be grateful with what I'm giving you," Hashem says. "I'm giving you a day – a rainy day, a cloudy day, a gloomy day – it's a day of life! Did you eat today? Did you wear clothing today? Did you go to the bathroom today? You lived a normal life today! What are you complaining about? You're complaining against Me!" וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה טוֹב מְאֹד – Hashem sees that everything He made is very good. But this man doesn't see anything good – everything is very not good! And that's why his mouth is talking *nirgonus*, *loshon hara*, on Hakodosh Boruch Hu!

You never thanked Hashem for rain? Never once?! You're asleep on the job! Wake up! Try it once. When rain comes down say, "Oh, we thank You Hashem for rain!" That's how to wake up! Start thinking! Start thanking!

Do you thank Hashem that you're wearing shoes? So many people in the world don't have any shoes at all! Shoes are an expensive luxury. There are entire nations that go barefoot and you have shoes! שָׁעֲשָׂה לִי כֵל – Even shoes You give me! You said the words today. Did you look at your shoes when you said the words? Did you think about your shoes when you said the words?

Think about the shoestring. Shoes without shoestrings are worthless. You think about the shoe-tips, plastic shoe-tips. If the laces went out of the hole and you want to put them back again, the tips help you put it back. Otherwise you have to spit on the end and twist it and push it through the hole. Think about these things.

Studying Clothes

מְלַבֵּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים! He clothes the naked! A *frum* man is saying the words – he's saying it with *kavanah*, but he's not thinking a thing about his *begadim*! Did you ever think about buttonholes? Buttonholes! There's a

seam around the buttonholes. Without the seam, the hole would get bigger every day. Do you ever thank Hashem for the seam? Let me see you make a seam. That's serious business!

A *rosh yeshiva* told me this many years ago so I'm telling other people the same thing. It was over sixty years ago; he said to me, "Could you make this?" He was showing me a buttonhole.

"No," I said. "I can't."

Malbish arumim! A seam around the buttonhole! And the buttons! Buttons! And coated fabrics. Once upon a time, they didn't have slippery fabrics. When your hand was putting in your sleeve, your fingernail got caught and it used to tear away through. Now it's like lubricated. Slippery fabric – it slides in! Coated fabrics! I remember there were no coated fabrics once upon a time!

Zippers! When zippers first came out, I remember! A big *chiddush!* Most of the zippers didn't work – they used to get caught. Now we have zippers; nothing is *shver*, it's like it's lubricated. Are you thanking Hashem for garments?! It's serious talk you're hearing now!

The Best Medicine

And how many good things are happening to you? Thousands of good things. It's wondrous the fact that you're able to sleep. Sleep is a *nes*. Sleeping is better than eating. It's a medicine. It heals many illnesses. It's a miracle; while you're sleeping your nerves that were frayed are sewed together again. Many things are healed by sleep. And therefore, sleep is a miracle. You lie down on the pillow and you fall asleep. And then *boruch Hashem* you got up in the morning. You're a new man. הַנּוֹתֵן לִי יָעַף כָּח – We have to thank Hashem for sleep.

You know, many people can't sleep. A man told me once – an old man, "Ich hob farloyren dem shlof – I lost my sleep." He couldn't sleep anymore. It's a tragedy. But you're a young man – you put your head on the pillow, immediately you fall asleep. Did you ever think of thanking Hashem? Some people never thank Hashem all their lives. Yes, you make a *bracha*, but you're not thinking what you're saying. הַמַּפִּיל חֶבְלֵי שְׁנָה – I thank You, Hashem that You caused me to fall asleep. You could be saying the *bracha* every night and not once thinking what they're saying. What a blessing sleep is!

Hands and Feet

Did you ever thank Hashem for your feet? הַמַּכִּין מַצְעָרֵי גֵבֶר – that's on the ability to walk; that's something else already, but some people don't

have feet at all. So where's the *brocha*? The reason you make no *brocha* on the feet is because you have them all the time! Even while you're sleeping you have feet so you don't make a *brocha* in the morning. Hands, you have all the time so there's no *brocha*. But you still have to thank Hashem for your hands and your feet even if there's no *nusach*! You never once thanked Hashem for your hands and your feet?! You never sang to Hashem that you have two hands and two feet!

I saw a man in the street with no arms at all. No arms at all – two stubs. A man without arms! If he could get one arm, how happy he would be! And you have two arms! And all our lives, we go on without thinking about the gift of two arms!

Here's a person without any feet! I saw him sitting in a wheelchair; his knees were covered with a blanket; there was nothing underneath the blanket. If he could have one foot, he would hop around on crutches; he'd be a happy man. But he didn't have even one – he had no feet at all! No feet at all! *Boruch Hashem* you have feet! Did ever stop to thank Hashem for feet?

Kidneys

And how many things are like that? Thousands of things! Here's a man who is so sorry he cannot urinate and three times a week he has to go to a machine, a whole process; you need a very expensive machine to take the stuff out of your body instead of two kidneys. It's a big nuisance; and each time they have to find new places to punch his body, to stick in the needles. His body is so full of holes – they can't even find a place to put in the needle anymore. This man, if he had one kidney, he'd be *meshugeh* with *simcha*. His mother gave him a kidney of her own, it didn't work. His brother donated a kidney, it didn't work. He was disappointed again and again and he remained without kidneys.

And you? You have two kidneys. Every day you go to the bathroom, it's a *nes*. Your intestines have sucked out from your food the nourishment and everything it needs and the rest is expelled. That's a *nes*. רופא כל בשר ונפלא ליעשות. It's a miracle what takes place; the kidneys do the job so perfectly. Did you thank Hashem for kidney? *Boruch Hashem*, you have two kidneys!

Our Function in This World

Now, there are thousands of such things! Not thousands; millions! And that's our function in this world – to learn how to live lives of gratitude. We're in this world for the purpose of training ourselves to be

thankful to Hashem and the only way to do that is by means of practice – you have to recognize all these details that Hakodosh Boruch Hu does for us.

But we can never forget that the first step towards recognizing the King is to recognize the King’s governors – the people around you. If you’ll say “What did Yosef do for me anyway,” you’ll also say, “What did Hashem do for me?” If you don’t get busy recognizing the many kindnesses that you’re getting every day from people, you’ll never be able to climb the ladder to gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And therefore, the first step is to open up your eyes, to open up your mind, and see the manifold benefits that people are giving you. That’s the first step in the ladder to success because **כָּל הַבּוֹפֵר בְּטוֹבוֹתָיו שֶׁל חֵבֶרֶד – If someone denies gratitude for a benefit that his fellowman bestowed upon him, לְבִסּוֹף בּוֹפֵר בְּטוֹבוֹתָיו שֶׁל מְקוֹם, – he will end up denying any benefits that he received from Hashem.**

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET’S GET PRACTICAL
Practicing The Gratitude Attitude

We cannot compartmentalize our attitudes. Our attitudes towards Hashem are a direct outgrowth of our attitudes to our fellows.

This week I will spend one minute each day focusing on the benefits I received from someone; my mother, my father, my spouse, my rebbi or anyone else and I will engender a true feeling of gratitude towards them. I will also have in mind that this exercise is a ladder that will help me reach true devotion to Hashem because of my gratitude to Him.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

59 - Hundreds of Blessings | **675** - Learning to Love Hashem
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Is it important to daven with a minyan?

A:

Not only is it important, it's an obligation; it's a *chiyuv* to daven with a *minyan*. *Tefilah b'tzibur* is a *chiyuv* and if people neglect it they should know they're not doing their duty. Now, if you can't help yourself because of *parnasah*, then that's a different question – I'm not saying anything. But absolutely it's a *chiyuv* to daven with a *minyan*.

But I must tell you it depends what kind of a *minyan*. If the *minyan* is such a hurry-up *minyan* that if you cough then you're already lost, don't show up to that *minyan*. But if you can daven with a slow *minyan*, it's a valuable gift. Davening with *kavanah* is a very important thing – very important. *U'tefilas yesharim retzono* – Hashem desires the *tefilah* of righteous people. He wants to hear *tefilah*. *Hakodosh Boruch Hu misaveh letefilasan shel tzaddikim* – He wants to hear the *tefilah*, but it has to be the *tefilah* of *yesharim*, the *tefilah* of *tzaddikim*. You need the chance, the time, to understand what you're saying.

By the way, it's *kedai*, very *kedai*, to learn the *peirush* of the *tefilah*. Most people never spent any time thinking about the *peirush* of the *tefilah* and they're missing out on a great opportunity. The words of *tefilah* are a goldmine of Torah ideals and the more you daven with *kavanah*, so your thoughts eventually follow your words. Once you accustom yourself to saying the words of davening with understanding you begin to live the great ideals expressed in the *tefilah*.

TAPE # E-138

— This week's Q&A sponsored: —

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ר' דוד בן יעקב צבי הכהן ז"ל ר' שלמה אליעזר בן יעקב ז"ל