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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

SERVE HASHEM WITH GRATITUDE

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Part I. The Avodah of Gratitude

Serving With Joy

In the midst of the Torah's description of all the troubles that chas veshalom might befall the Am Yisroel, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives an explanation, a reason, for why He'll bring those punishments: תחת אֲשֶׁר – לא עִבַּרְתָּ אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרֹב כָּל – All this will befall you because you did not serve Hashem your G-d, with joy and with a merry heart, from an abundance of everything (Devarim 28:47).

Now, we should pay attention to those words because it's a remarkable idea that the Torah is emphasizing here. After all, we would have said that it's poshut why the punishments come – it's because we didn't keep the Torah, that's all. That's what we think the Torah should have said: "I'm punishing you תחת אֲשֶׁר לא עִבַּרְתָּ, because you didn't serve

Me.” But it doesn’t say that; it adds a caveat – it says that we didn’t serve Him “with joy and a merry heart.”

Serving Is Not Enough

Now, that’s a queer criticism. So what if we don’t serve Him with a merry heart? Ok, so we weren’t happy. Is that a reason for these terrible punishments? After all, we served Him – it doesn’t say we didn’t. We were good Orthodox Jews. We put on tefillin. We kept Shabbos. We learned Torah. We did chessed and mitzvos. The Am Yisroel was very frum. And so, does it make sense that we should be sent into Exile and suffer all these consequences just because we did it without happiness?

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, “Yes. If you don’t serve Me b’simcha, in joy, u’vtuv leivav, with a merry heart, mei’rov kol, because of everything I’m giving you, that’s not called service. And if you’re lacking that, it’s already a big enough sin that it deserves everything mentioned in this parsha, all the punishments in the tochacha.”

The Avodah of Humility

Now, that has to be explained because it’s a chiddush to us. After all, we think we know what it means to serve Hashem. It means fulfilling the Torah; doing mitzvos, learning Torah, raising frum children, going to shul every day, keeping everything, the whole Shulchan Aruch. But we’re learning now that all that is not avodas Hashem yet.

It’s required of course; you must do it but it’s like wearing pants. You have to wear pants on the street, absolutely, but it doesn’t make you an eved Hashem. Keeping everything, being frum, makes you a Jew, that’s all. But it’s still only the bare bones minimum. It’s not avodas Hashem yet.

You know what avodah is? Avodah means someone who is a ‘subject’. ‘Subject’, if you’ll translate the word, sub means underneath and ject means to throw, to cast; ‘to be cast underneath’. So avodah means that we are subjected, we are humbled, before Hashem. “We serve You because we are humbled before You.”

Wealth of Normal Living

The idea is like this. Suppose somebody is giving you a thousand dollars a minute; every minute another thousand. Imagine you go to your rich uncle and he has plenty of it to give. So he takes out \$1000 and he hands it to you. “Nephew, enjoy it!” But before you have a chance to say thank you, he gives you another \$1000. You’re surprised. “How am I

going to thank him?” And then another \$1000. So you're tongue-tied. “Thank you Uncle Abe. Thank you Uncle Abe, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.” You can't keep up. And if you can't keep up, all you feel is humility. You're humbled before the giver.

And so when Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives you a gift and another gift and another gift – He gives tens of thousands of gifts, ribei revavos, tens of thousands of times tens of thousands of gifts – so you're not able even to say thank You for them because they're so many.

And it's much more than just thousand dollar bills. Because \$1000 is worthless if you can't move your bowels. If you don't believe me it's worth much more than \$1000 then ask a man who is in a hospital waiting for an operation to restore his normal method of urinating. One morning he got up and his bladder was full but he just couldn't evacuate it. And he told his wife, and they decided that they should go to the emergency room. It was embarrassing but it was an emergency. No choice. You can't wait any longer. They waited maybe an hour or two hours and now he's bursting.

The Priceless Procedure

And so they hurried to the hospital and they're standing in line or sitting in a waiting room, but finally he sees that he'll collapse. He goes over to the nurse at the desk and he says “This is an emergency.”

And she says “What is it?”

“It's three hours already that I wasn't able to urinate.”

“Oh,” she says, “You should have said that immediately.”

And she hurries him through a side door and they go straight to the operating room. But it's not simple. And that's only one little procedure just to temporarily relieve him. Because now he has to have one operation and another operation. And there are weeks in between when he walks around in the hospital holding a bottle in his hand.

He looks forward to that great day when he'll come home and once more he'll be like everybody else; he'll urinate like a king! Oh, he'll be like a millionaire when that happens.

The Priceless Pump

But you, you're already that millionaire! Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving you a thousand dollars and a thousand dollars and a thousand dollars every day. Just because it happens always so it's not worth

\$1,000? So if you're a millionaire right now, without any procedures and operations, you're not going to be humbled in gratitude?

Or every day the miracle that your heart continues to pump. It's a very delicate adjustment that the heart should pump because this opening has to open and while this opening opens another opening has to close at that moment because they can't both be open. So while one opens the other closes. And when the next one opens, the old one closes. And it goes on all day long, day and night, without a hitch for so many years, and you don't even feel the process. It's so perfect. It's so smooth within you. Your heart is beating.

And so He's giving you greater things than \$1,000. People pay \$10,000 that their heart should begin to beat again. Suppose Chas veshalom Hashem would be giving you money but your heart isn't beating. Chas veshalom if the heart stops beating so they rush him into the operating room and the doctor makes an incision in his chest and he takes hold of the heart in his hands and starts massaging his heart. He massages the heart until miraculously it starts beating again.

Only a good doctor could do that and so if he presents you with a bill for \$10,000, are you going to quibble? It's cheap at any price. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving it to you all the time. He is giving you gifts one after the other. Not only your kidneys and your bladder and your heart. Hundreds of gifts He's giving you every minute. Thousands, tens of thousands, of gifts. And what the tochacha is saying is that we have to start thinking about them. We're obligated to be humbled in gratitude.

American Heads

Now it'll take some time to get this into our heads. Hearing it is not enough because we're kefuyei tov today. "What's to be grateful for?" the American head says.

Here's an American boy who grew up in an American house. His parents fed him and clothed him. Did he stop to say thank you when his mother gave him breakfast? When his father paid the rent did he say thank you? It didn't even enter his mind. And it will never enter his mind. Even when he's an old man he doesn't look back and say, "Look what they did. They paid rent for me. They fed me."

Like I told you once before, his mother gets down on her knees before the child and begs him, "Please, do me a favor and eat." And finally when this little czar sitting in his high chair, after being cajoled and

bribed, when he finally condescends to take a spoonful he feels that he has conferred upon his mother the biggest favor.

And in America the children never grow up. Only that instead of porridge, now he wants to confer a favor on his parents by taking a car from them. He wants his allowance. He grows up to be the most corrupt kind of individual, a *mushchas*, a monster. To thank? To feel humbled? Such a *meshugas* would never enter his mind.

Seeing Is Believing

Even now when I'm saying this to you, people will think, "Why should I thank them?" I hear all kinds of reasons why it's not necessary to thank them. And surely to be grateful to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, they don't understand. Your father, your mother, at least you see them. You see your mother slaving away over the stove. You see your father, he comes home wiped out after a day of slaving away in the office. You see that, so it's easier. But Hashem, out of sight, out of mind.

And so we have a big job ahead of us; because that's the foundation of everything. What can I pay back to Hashem for all that He bestowed upon me? (Tehillim 116:12). I can't do a thing because You don't need a thing from me.

"How am I going to serve You?" When a butler serves, he walks in with a tray carrying a bottle and glasses; so he's doing a benefit. But how am I serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu? What am I giving Him? He is rich. He is powerful. He has everything. He has me too. So what am I doing for Him? There's nothing I can do except to feel that I cannot do anything. How could there be any service towards Hakadosh Baruch Hu?

The answer is that it's the attitude that means everything. The feeling that you must do something and that you cannot do anything, that feeling is *avodah*. It's a feeling of being humbled before Hashem. That's the concept of *avodas Hashem*. Everything I do in this world, everything I do as a Jew, it's because I'm weighed down in debt to You, Hashem.

Part II. The Avodah of Happiness

Understanding the Tochacha

Now with this definition we can understand what it means the criticism in our parsha, **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב**

מֵרֵב כָּל – you did not serve Hashem your G-d, with joy and with a merry heart, from an abundance of everything. Without joy? Is that so bad? Yes, because that's the definition of the service of Hashem, to serve Him with gratitude.

So when you put on tefillin, whatever the reason is – and there are reasons for every mitzvah – but realize that the chief reason is a demonstration that you are humbled before Hashem. Whether you study Torah or wear tzitzis or keep Shabbos or kashrus; when you sit in the sukkah, have a mezuzah on your door or you say krias shema; when you eat matzah, when you're mekayem the mitzvah of lulav and when you give tzedaka; whatever you do, what are you doing? You're expressing your humble gratitude.

Even what you won't do; when you take a walk on Shabbos and you see a dollar bill lying on the ground and you don't pick it up so you're fulfilling an act by passing it by. The kiyum of the lav of Shabbos is a demonstration that you are an eved Hashem. Avodah is not only aseh; lo sa'aseh is also avodah.

It's All About TYH

So when you look for reasons for mitzvos, whether it's mitzvos of doing or mitzvos of prohibitions, the prime reason is to demonstrate our humility to Hashem. All the mitzvos together plus Torah are nothing but a form of saying thank You Hashem, that's all. The tzurah, the outward expression, is the doing of the mitzvah but the pnimiyus, the inner purpose of the mitzvah that transforms it into avodah is when it's done as a form of thanks to Hashem.

And therefore, suppose you do all these things but you don't have this attitude, so you're doing the opposite of avodah; you think you're doing a favor to Hashem. That's what you think. You have the attitude that you're the benefactor and Hashem owes you. Because what did He give you in this world? You're not a millionaire. You're not a multi-millionaire. And so you're looking forward to what will happen in the World to Come. There you're going to present a big bill to Hashem.

And we'll be very surprised; Hakadosh Baruch Hu might ask us the question, "Do you realize that you haven't paid me yet for the first day of your life?" You didn't serve Me meirov kol; you didn't serve Me with happiness, out of gratitude for what I've given you.

A Hole in Your Cup

Now, all this is easier said than done; it's not a matter of sitting here and agreeing with me. No, it takes work; it's not so easy. One of the biggest impediments to our being happy and grateful to Hakadosh Baruch Hu all the time is that our cups have holes in them. I'll explain that.

In Ashrei there's a possuk that goes like this. זָכַר רַב טוֹבָהּ – The remembrance of Your great goodness, יִבְיְעוּ רַב טוֹבָהּ יִבְיְעוּ – they will utter. Now we translate יִבְיְעוּ as 'they will utter' but it's not the right translation though. 'They will utter the remembrance of Your great goodness'? No. יִבְיְעוּ comes from נוֹבֵעַ, to flow, like a fountain, מְעַן נוֹבֵעַ. It means 'the remembrance of Your goodness overflows'.

Now, how does goodness overflow? Let's say you're sitting with a cup at a party and somebody pours some wine into your cup. Now another person comes and pours in some more wine. And another pours in some more wine. What happens? The cup overflows. When it's too full it is noveia, it overflows.

A Hole in Your Kup

Now every man has a cup. There's a kup up here (the Rav pointed at his head) and also a cup down here in the heart. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu starts putting His kindness in the cups.

Your heart is pumping. That's wine being poured into your cup. You're able to go to the bathroom, that's more wine. Every time it's more wine. Every night you sleep b'shalom in your bed, your cup is being filled more. You can walk outside on the street? You can see? You're breathing? The sun is shining? You're married? You were married yesterday and the day before too. Each day is more wine being poured into your cup.

Only what happens? If your kup has a hole in it, it leaks out; and no matter how much gets poured in, it will never overflow. It's in your cup for a moment, maybe not enough to even notice it, and then it leaks out. And so the man who has a hole at the bottom of his cup, he's always forgetting. Whenever he looks into his cup, it's empty. What do I have already? That's why he's looking for good times. Because he forgets all the past favors; all the gifts and happiness leak out.

The No-Leak Cup

But suppose you have a good kup. If your cup doesn't have a hole in it, or if it has a hole but you get busy plugging it, so you'll become a happy man. Your cup will always be overflowing with happiness. That's

what Dovid said, בּוֹסֵי רוּיָהּ – “My cup overflows.” A man who remembers, so his cup is always filling up, and after a while it overflows. “My cup overflows with chesed Hashem because I don’t let anything leak out from the bottom!”

It means you have to remember all the breakfasts that you ate, all the lunches and all the suppers. You have to remember all the nights you slept. You had a bed, most of you had a bed with a mattress. Most of you had a pillow too. You have to remember the fact that you have a roof over your head. You have a kitchen and a bedroom. You have a bathroom.

Here’s an old woman, demented and homeless. She’s sitting on a park bench; she doesn’t have a kitchen, she doesn’t have a bedroom. All of her earthly belongings are in a little shopping cart in front of her. And she sits and stares out at world in which she has no friends because people are afraid to talk to her. She’s forsaken.

You have at least a home, a place where you can rest at night. She has to find a park bench. She has to be afraid of every malicious evildoer that passes by. She trembles when she tries to rest. She can’t sleep during the night. Even the passing sound of a shoe frightens her. Maybe it’s a wicked fellow looking to make trouble for her. Her life is spent in fears, true or imaginary. She has no place to wash, no place to bathe. And food? She’s hungry all the time. Her clothing is ragged, malodorous.

Savoring the ‘Small’ Stuff

So we have to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for our garments. Every time you go to the closet and take out a garment, it’s a happiness. Ah, clean laundry. It’s a pleasure. Every time you put on shoes you are a little happier than yesterday.

\All the conveniences; a warm home in winter, maybe air-conditioned in the summer. You have a refrigerator, electric lights, indoor plumbing.

We have privacy. More or less you have safety when you close and lock your door. You have maybe a family. You have good health. Most of us here haven’t had a big headache since last Rosh Hashanah. That’s an achievement! Not one migraine headache in an entire year!

How To Say Hodu

So many things! And we’re every expected to utilize all of them to be the rock bottom foundation of our avodas Hashem. That’s why we do everything: to serve You, Hashem. It’s one long song of gratitude of הוֹדוּ לַה’ בִּי טוֹב כִּי לַעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ.

And so if a person strides into a synagogue, let's say Shabbos morning, and he's full of enthusiasm and he wants to do Hakadosh Baruch Hu a big favor. And so he starts Hodu LaShem and he's singing with enthusiasm. He's helping to elevate the atmosphere in the synagogue with hislahavus. Very good! It's a beautiful thing!

But it's not everything. Because he thinks that he's the paragon, the example, of avodah. But it might not be so. It could be he's very far away from it because he's lacking the entire preface to avodah. Avodah means that he walks into the beis knesses with the thought that he is loaded down with obligations.

Avodah Means Happiness

That's the secret of becoming perfect as a servant of Hashem; to become full of gratitude. It matters what he put into his head before he came to shul, what he was thinking about before he came in the door. And that's what he'll put into the words. "Hashem's giving me everything. I have shoes. I have hair. I have everything! Baruch Hashem!" He's so happy, so humbled. וְאֵל תִּשְׁבְּחֵהוּ בְּלִגְמוֹלֵינוּ – I won't forget any of the kindnesses He bestowed on me.

Happiness doesn't mean a Caribbean cruise or that your name is in the papers, that you're famous. No; it means the constant kindness that He showers down on you. Your teeth! Teeth are so much fun! Click them up and down. Ah, such a simcha! Sharp ones in the front for cutting food, grinders in the back for chewing. Ah, a pleasure. I can see! I can move my joints! On the way to shul, you're rejoicing in your joints, how they're functioning so perfectly.

Now these are not superfluous things. These are part of avodas Hashem. It's a pity that they're not emphasized, that they're so ignored. A frum Jew means a happy Jew. He's so happy and so satisfied with life, so full of gratitude, it overflows. בּוֹסֵי רוּיָהּ – My cup is overflowing.

That's the ABC of being frum. When you receive gifts and you can't pay back, you're loaded down with obligations and you're seeking a way of expressing your humility. That's what avodah is. It's a chiddush maybe to most people but it's the plain truth; the foundation of all avodas Hashem is first of all to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu and feel an obligation for what He does for you. And that means that once you get into the mode of thanking Hashem for everything, you're going to change your character. That's how you'll become an oveid Hashem.

Part III. Avodah For Life

Lomzheh Torah

Now, to add one more important layer to this subject I want to talk to you now about a secret, a secret happiness that most people don't enjoy. I'll explain soon why it's a secret but it's a tragedy that people don't know about it because it's such a tremendous happiness that if we would learn how yes to enjoy it and how to keep our cups filled with this happiness, so our avodas Hashem בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב would be an entirely different story.

I'll tell you first a story, a true story, from the mashgiach in the Lomzhe Yeshiva. The mashgiach in the yeshiva is the man who takes care, he supervises the bochurim, and he once noticed a sad-faced bachur.

Now why should a young man be sad in a yeshiva? There are reasons. It could be he had no family. It could be he had no clothing. Maybe he had no money for food. A yeshiva man in Lomzhe didn't have too much gashmiyus. There could be other reasons. Maybe he wasn't succeeding in learning. Whatever it was, he was moping in the corner.

The Big Mazel Tov

So the mashgiach approached him, seized him by his lapels, and said to him, "Congratulations you lucky fellow! Mazel tov!"

The bachur looked at him. What's the good news? The bachur looked at the mashgiach. What's this all about?

And the mashgiach was speaking enthusiastically. "How happy is your lot! You know how fortunate you are? There are millions who envy you! Mazal tov! Mazel tov! Mazel tov!" The mashgiach said it five or six times.

And he continued in this vein for a long time. Meanwhile the young man was waiting to hear the good news; he was waiting to hear the secret! He won the lottery maybe.

And finally the mashgiach said, "Mazel tov that you're alive!"

Pickles Aren't Everything

Oh, is that a letdown. To be alive? That's the mazel tov? That's the happiness?

But it's as true as could be. Whose fault is it that we think that we have to have ice cream or dill pickles or a trip to Coney Island, whatever it is, to make life worthwhile? Life itself, that's the greatest happiness.

Now, we don't appreciate that. We're accustomed to it, but to be alive is a tremendous simchah; there's nothing that can compare to the joy of being alive. Because everything we spoke about – your heart beating and your bladder and your lungs and your joints and your eyes, everything – all these details of life are actually a tremendous empire, whose purpose is life.

A human body is so complicated with millions of details interlocking, working together, and the effect of everything together is the joy of being alive. Your entire system is functioning together like a well-run empire for the purpose of giving you that happiness.

Don't Wait to Realize

Now when do most people realize how great that joy is? When they're in danger of losing it. When a man is lying on a hospital bed in his last hours and he knows his hours are numbered so he looks out of the window and then he realizes for the first time how sweet it is just to be alive. Even though he has aches and pains; even though he's in a dingy room on a dingy Brooklyn street where the hospital is situated. And even though the nurses are rude; they don't come when he rings the bell. And it happens to be a gray day too, a cloudy day. But now that he has to say farewell forever he begins to appreciate that life itself is the greatest of all happinesses in this world.

Go to a cemetery and offer one of the inmates there the opportunity to come out of his grave. Imagine a rich millionaire, he's buried on Ocean Parkway in a stone vault. It cost a pile of money a stone vault. And he left over a big estate to his heirs. And now you tell him, "I'll get you out of the grave and you can have all your money back. You'll have your mansion back and your fancy car and the best meals too."

He wouldn't give a hoot for all that. If he could climb out of his cold grave and be alive once again he wouldn't be interested in reclaiming his money. He'd be so intoxicated with the happiness of life that he'd be dancing in the cemetery. He would do a jig and sing songs. He wouldn't be interested in anything else. He'd be so intoxicated with life that having nothing else doesn't mean a thing.

The Best Morning News

And therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu insists that we should invest efforts to appreciate the gift of life. Every morning you say to Hashem, מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ – I give thanks to You, Hashem, שְׁהִחַיֵּתָ בִּי נַשְׁמָתִי – that You gave back to me my life, my awareness. To be aware, to be awake and alive, that's happiness.

Isn't it a pity that we don't think about that every morning? When you open your eyes in the morning, the first thought should be, "Woohoo! Good news! I'm alive!"

You know, a lot of people, lo aleichem v'lo aleinu, don't get that good news in the morning. Every morning, in bedrooms all over the world, it happens the other way. A wife takes a look at her husband in the next bed, and she's thinking, "His color is different today." And she's alarmed. She says, "Jake get up!" No answer. And she seizes him and shakes him. "Jake! Jake!" Nothing. It's an emergency and an ambulance comes. It's too late.

It happens again and again. And therefore the first good news in the morning is you open your eyes. You're alive. You're alive! Practice that tomorrow morning. Ah, We get up in the morning, that's happiness. It's a tremendous happiness. There's no physical happiness that can equal the joy of being alive.

Resurrecting the Dead

You know it's a pity, a tragedy, that we say it every day in the davening – baruch atah Hashem mechayeh hameisim – and we don't even realize it.

Now of course that includes the resurrection of the dead in the distant future, but it means also right now. You say every day ה' מְחַיֶּה אֶת־הַמֵּתִים – You Hashem bring back the dead to life, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִכָּל־כָּל־חַיִּים, מְחַיֶּה – You are great to save and You feed the living with kindness, מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים – You bring the dead back to life. So it's two times; 'You revive the dead,' and then again 'You revive the dead'. What's the first one? What's the second one? We're just repeating?

No, you're not repeating. The first one is that You revived us from our sleep. We weren't conscious. That's not living. Of course, you have to sleep, but you're not living when you're asleep. And some people never wake up from that sleep! And I got up this morning! I'm alive! So the first mechayeh meisim atah is that you were revived from the death of sleep. The second time is techiyas hameisim le'asid lavo, in the future;

while we're on the subject we thank for that too. But number one is I'm alive! I'm alive right now!

Humbled For the Resurrection

So isn't that a wasted opportunity when you say baruch atah Hashem mechayeh hameisim – 'I bend my knees in gratitude to You that You brought me back to life this morning again' and you're not thinking about it at all? Are you thinking how good it is to be alive? You're rattling off words, that's all. So doesn't it pay to stop and try to gain this attitude of really enjoying life?

And three times a day by davening, that's not enough. These are just the reminders. It's what you take away from the davening, that's what matters. All day, all the time, to walk around with that undercurrent of happiness. The plain fact of being alive is such fun that there's nothing in the world that could equal it.

Keeping Secrets

Now, what I'm telling you now is a secret. Don't tell anybody. Mishlei warns you, בְּאָזְנֵי כְסִיל אַל תְּדַבֵּר – don't talk to foolish people about these things (Mishlei 29:3). And the whole world is foolish when it comes to these things. They only know the chitzoniyus, not the pnimiyus. Even in the yeshiva; if you go into the yeshiva and tell them that you're so happy that you're alive that you're going to sit down and learn a blatt Gemara just because of that, because you're overflowing with gratitude to Hashem, they'll laugh at you.

And therefore you can't tell this secret to everyone. I'm fortunate that I'm talking to an intelligent audience. You people are high quality, intelligent people so I know I can tell you things, but you have to be careful when you repeat these things to other people. יְהִי לָךְ לְבָרֶךְ וְאֵין לְאֲרִים אֲתָךְ – They should be for you alone, and a stranger cannot share it with you (ibid. 5:17).

But at least for you they should be! יְהִי לָךְ! You have to make it your business to tell yourself. So when you're home, when you're in the street, when you're shopping – wherever you are, if you stop for a moment and think, "I'm still alive! Ah, chasdei Hashem!"

And all the details of life too. Never forget the details! Think and thank, think and thank, always. Whenever you can, steal a minute to appreciate the gifts you're getting from Hakadosh Baruch Hu all the time.

A Rock Solid Foundation

Oh, you're doing a great thing now. In that minute that you're thinking of thanking Hashem, that you're grateful to Hashem, that itself is a tremendous accomplishment. Because you're setting a foundation for all of your avodah now. All of your avodas Hashem – your mitzvos, your learning, your davening, your chessed, your middos tovos, raising your frum family – it's all one big kiyum of serving Hashem **בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מֵרַב כּל**.

Because that's what avodah, service, means. You can't serve Hashem anything. He doesn't need you. And so the attitude of the Jew is always **מָה אֶשִׁיב לָהּ כָּל תַּגְּמוּלוֹהִי עָלַי** – What can I pay You back, all that You did for me? (Tehillim 116:12). I can't pay back anything so I become nichna; I'm humbled before You in gratitude. So much You're giving me and I can't give You anything. So what's left for me to do except fulfilling Your will. I'll serve You by fulfilling everything I can, everything that You asked of me; at least that I can do. Everything I do, I'll do it because I'm humbled before You in gratitude. I'll serve You always **בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מֵרַב כּל**!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Gaining Gratitude in Life

We learned about how important gratitude toward Hashem is; it is fundamental to our service of Hashem. And Rav Miller says: “Never forget the details! Think and thank, think and thank, always. Whenever you can, steal a minute to appreciate the gifts you're getting from Hakadosh Baruch Hu all the time.” This week I will bli neder be extra careful to recite the prayer of “Modeh Ani” as soon as I wake up in the morning with full concentration, I will also try to maintain that attitude throughout the day.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

35 – Supreme Service | **237** – Serve Hashem With Joy

826 – House of Thanksgiving | **841** – Choose Life

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QUESTION

Since we see that Hashem has encouraged progress in the field of medicine and that it was done by the use of donated bodies or organs for research, why doesn't the Jewish nation permit the donation of bodies or organs?

ANSWER

And the answer is that when the President passes away nobody considers a proposal of taking his body for experiment. The President's body is never taken for experiment; it's buried in state. And that's because of the reverence we have for a President. And we should have a reverence for a President – even for a dead President; even for a dead ex-President.

Now, where will you get bodies for scientific research? On the Bowery. They're dropping dead every day on the Bowery. They are homeless people and there is nobody to claim their bodies, and so there's no reason why they shouldn't be used. Also, in India there are masses of people who die and their families are happy to sell their bodies for \$25. And so there is no lack of bodies on which to do experiments.

The Jewish nation has been accorded an especial status by Hashem. We are a mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh. It's not our fault. We didn't choose that name – He gave it to us. What can we do? We are a holy people. And therefore even more than the President, a Jewish body is inviolate. It's sacred. We cannot do anything except to honor it and bury it without making the slightest use for no matter what purpose.

And so you can have Orthodox Jewish doctors – if they're not kohanim – and they can cut up bodies merrily and make their research. You can get plenty of bodies. It's only a matter of a few dollars. But to make use of the Am Kadosh? No; that can't be helped. We are in a different class. And it will take a long time for us to fully appreciate that.

It's not that we Jews are proud or we Jews try to classify ourselves as superior. It's a principle that the Torah has taught us. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told us that. We are superior, and it can't be helped. And therefore our bodies are not for experiment.

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