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RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

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WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

SERVING HASHEM - AVODAH

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Part I. The Lost Korban

Thericide or Homicide?

In Parshas Achrei Mos we read the *parsha* of *shechutei chutz*; it's the case of somebody who *shechts* a *korban* outside of the *azarah*. What happened? He took an animal, a kosher *korban* – it has no blemish and so it's fit to be offered up on the *mizbeyach* – but instead of slaughtering it inside the *azarah*, אֶל פְּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, like the Torah commands, he slaughtered it outside, in Yerushalayim.

So the Torah says, דָּם יִחָשֵׁב לְאִישׁ הֵהוּא – *It will be considered for that man as blood*, דָּם שָׁפַךְ – *he shed blood* (Vayikra 17:4). It means that he's *chayav kareis* but it's explained in the Torah with the idea that he 'shed blood' – and that needs an explanation.

Now it's true that he shed blood of an animal needlessly; and not any animal – it was a *hekdesch* animal, a holy *korban* – but how can you call that דָם שָׁפַךְ, shedding blood? He killed a sheep or a cow, that's all. It's not murder! Even if it's done unnecessarily and even if you did it with cruelty; it's wrong of course, but nobody would call it *shefichas domim*. But it says here דָם שָׁפַךְ הוּא – *it's considered a blood-guilt for that person*. It means that the words 'he spilled blood' are talking about murder.

Now, that's hard to understand. Murder?! Certainly, the Torah says וְשָׁחַטוּ פֶתַח אֵהָל מוֹעֵד and he ignored that mitzvah – but how can we call it *shefichas domim*? He didn't kill anyone!

It Is Opportunicide

And the answer is דָם שָׁפַךְ – *He did kill a person!* And that person is himself! He shed his own blood! *Shefichas domim!* Now, suicide, that's a very serious matter, a very serious crime; and it needs to be explained because that we *surely* don't understand. How did he spill his *own* blood?

So first we have to understand what a *korban* is; what a glorious opportunity it is when a person goes into the Beis Hamikdash to slaughter an animal and put it on the *mizbeyach* for Hashem. You know what is happening there? It's not the animal you're offering to Hashem; it's yourself. A *korban* is an experience of being *makriv* yourself to Hashem.

That's why if you ever read in some book where an *apikoris* is trying to ridicule our Torah and he says that the Temple sacrifices are reminiscent of ancient human sacrifices, so you should know that he's absolutely right. That's what it is.

The Ancients Knew Better

Because in ancient times people meant business. And it was a question that the pious ones asked: בְּמָה אֶקְרֶם ה' – *With what can I come towards Hashem?* אֲבִיךָ לְאַלְקֵי מְרוֹם – *with what can I show how humbled I am in my gratitude?* (Michah 6:6).

Now this question may not bother us, but it's not a compliment to us that it doesn't. The truth is we say similar words all the time, מָה אֲשִׁיב לָהּ – *With what can I pay back Hashem,* כָּל תְּגִמּוּלוֹהֶי עָלַי – *for all the good that He did for me?* (Tehillim 116:12) only that we don't mean it at all. But the people of antiquity, they did.

And they said הֲאֵתֶן בְּכוֹרֵי פִשְׁעֵי – *“Should I give my firstborn for my sin of ingratitude, פְּרִי בְטֶנְי תַחַת נַפְשִׁי – the fruit of my body in gratitude for the life you give me?”* (Michah *ibid.*) They wanted to sacrifice their children; they wanted to sacrifice themselves. Nothing else would suffice except for their own flesh and blood. The only thing you could do was to give back to Him what He gave you; to sacrifice yourself to Him.

And don't think it's a silly thing, a barbarous thing. Why *shouldn't* we do it? It's only barbarous because people are divorced from the realities of the world. The truth of the world is there's a Hashem, a Creator, and He gives us so much. And the most genuine way of expressing that we owe everything to Him – not only the details of life *but life itself* – would be to sacrifice ourselves to Him.

The Right Thing To Do

As horrible as that seems to our modern ears, we have to realize that intellectually that's the right way; we enjoyed sixty, seventy years of life, whatever it is, but sooner or later the debt of gratitude to the Borei who gave us our lives requires that we should be willing to give it back to Him. We should be obligated to sacrifice ourselves as *korbanos* to Hashem as the ultimate expression of gratitude.

We're fortunate only that Hakadosh Baruch Hu, in His great mercies, prohibits that. He says “אַל תַּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנֶּעָר וְאֶל תַּעֲשֵׂ לּוֹ מְאוֹמָהּ – Don't harm yourselves.” Instead take an אָחַר אֵיל, *take an animal* and sacrifice that in your place.

And that's why from the very beginning of our nation we sacrificed not ourselves but rams and cattle; and the purpose was that – to show that we are willing to give our lives for Hashem. The bringing of a *korban* is intended to be a dramatization, a vicarious demonstration of actually seeing yourself slaughtered. You slaughter a lamb or a bull and the blood is sprinkled on the *mizbeyach* as if to say, “Ribono Shel Olam, I give myself back to You!”

The Therianthropy Transformation

That's why the person who is bringing the *korban* first puts his hand on its head: וְסָמַךְ אֶת יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעֵלָה. You put your hand on the head of the animal because you are making it your agent, your representative. Like when Moshe put his hands on Yehoshua; from now on Yehoshua took over and was a *shaliach* of Moshe Rabbeinu. And so your *olah* is a representative of you.

So here you're standing in the *azarah* with your sheep and you're preparing your mind for the tremendous experience. You understand what's going to happen now, and you're expected to raise up your mind, your thoughts, to the great pinnacle of self-sacrifice. This *korban* is going to bring you *karov*, close, to Hashem. *Korban* means you're *makriv*, you're *mekarev* yourself to Hashem to feel that you belong to Him. But not only your loyalties and your ideals you'll give to Him; *mamesh* your *dam* and your *chelev* and your flesh belong to Him. And you're ready now to experience it!

So you pick up the *kli shareis*, that holy knife, and you cut the neck and the blood gushes out; its blood coming from your neck. You feel your own neck is being slit, *shtei simanim*, and your blood is gushing out.

“That’s me. That’s what I want. Hashem doesn’t let me but that’s what I want.” And your blood runs cold! It’s a tremendous thrill, a chilling experience! “My own blood is pouring out!”

The Kohen and Your Blood

And the *kohen* is standing there with a bowl, under your neck and catching the blood. “That’s my blood in that *hekdesch keili*. What’s he doing now with my life-blood?”

And the *kohen* runs over to the *mizbeyach* and sprinkles the blood on the edges. Your blood! It means ‘This is for You Hashem. My life is being given to You.’

And then they take the animal and skin it – when the skin is removed, it resembles a human body a little – and they put one at a time each limb on the *mizbeyach*; not the whole thing together. Each limb is brought separately onto the fires of the *mizbeyach* to show Hashem we’re so grateful for each part of life too. “You gave me an arm, so I’m offering up my arm to You. You gave me legs for so long; here, I’m returning my legs to You in gratitude.”

Ooh wah, was that a thrilling experience! The blood runs cold with emotion just thinking about it. We shiver! The *eivarim*, the limbs, and the *cheilev*, the fats, that’s *you* on the *mizbeyach*! And as the fire burns and goes up, the smoke of the burning *korban*, it’s the smoke of *your own* body being burned and going up to Hashem.

You’re offering your entire body in the smoke to Hashem. You’re going up now in the smoke; up and up and up to Hashem. And *אֶת רִיחַ הַנְּיָחוֹחַ* – Hashem breathes in, *kavyachol*, that pleasant savor and He has *nachas ruach* from the loyalty of the people who wish to serve Him with their bodies.

Bamboozled by Blood-Spillers

Today we have lost perspective in appreciating what is meant by a sacrifice. We have been propagandized and bamboozled by gentile writers and ignorant Jewish writers who have belittled offerings *for the greater glory of substitute religions*. ‘Judaism,’ they say, ‘was a religion of sacrifice, of slaughtering; it was a bloody religion.’

But what are they doing the last two thousand years? They slaughter Jews like cattle. The ‘religion of love’ that disdains offerings slits Jewish throats instead. Or they hacked Jews to death with axes. But to sacrifice cattle in a Temple to a G-d? Oh no, never! That’s brutal; it’s terrible. It’s bloody and antiquated.

And because the world has been poisoned by this attitude so even we lost sight of the great benefit of *korbanos*. The modern Jew – I mean the Orthodox Jew, the one in Williamsburg even – lost sight of the importance and the value of sacrifices.

But for the Jew of antiquity – and we look forward to that again – it was an impressive experience to bring an offering. A person who went through this was never the same again because he knew that he had given himself entirely to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. A man who brought an offering was no longer the same person.

Cry Over Spilled Blood

And that's what it was supposed to be for the man in our *parsha*. It was going to be that, but instead it was nothing. You had an animal that was perfect, a *tomim*, fit to be a *korban*. And you were *makdish* it and now you're ready for a great experience – you're going to be *makriv* yourself on the *mizbeyach* to your Creator. If only you had taken it inside the *azarah* and slaughtered it as it should have been slaughtered, you would be changed for life when you saw how that *korban* was being offered up. You would have gained a tremendous *iluy*, an elevation of your mind that would accompany you all your life.

But you took this *korban* and slaughtered it outside – outside, it's 100% a waste. It becomes *ossur*; it's useless. It's not a *korban*, a coming close, anymore. And so this man squandered his great opportunity.

And so whose blood did he shed? His own blood. He wasted an opportunity to fulfill his purpose in this world and therefore **דָּם יִקָּשֵׁב לְאִישׁ דָּם יִהְיֶהוּא**. For wasting that opportunity to gain that tremendous experience, that thrill of being devoted to Hashem with all of his life and body, **דָּם שָׁפַךְ** – *he's chayav kareis*; because he shed his own blood.

The reason why blood is coursing through your veins right now is so that you should accomplish something with yourself in this world. And if you're taking an opportunity for perfection of your personality and throwing it away, that's killing yourself; you're spilling the blood of your life.

Part II. The Lost Prayer

The Korban of Prayer

Now, this attitude of *dam shafach* is an important lesson for us; very important. Because even though we don't have that same opportunity today – we don't have the *korbanos* and so we can't experience that exact *kirvas Elokim* like they did – but we should know that we have something in its place. **תְּפִלוֹת כְּנֶגֶד תְּמִידִים תִּקְנוּם** – *Our davening was established to parallel*

the *korbanos* (Brachos 26a). That's what the Chachomim tell us: תַּפִּלָּה בְּמָקוֹם קָרְבָּן – *Davening is instead of bringing a korban (ibid.)*

“That's what I want from you,” Hashem says. תַּפִּלַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל רְצוֹנוֹ – *He favors our prayers like a korban.* It's the same *lashon* we find by *korbanos*: לְרַצְּנוֹתָם תִּזְבְּחוּהוּ – that's Hashem's Will. He wants people to offer Him offerings of prayer because *tefillah* can be one of the great achievements of a person in this world, almost as great as the '*korban experience*'!

That's why the Gemara describes *davening* as דְּבָרִים הָעוֹמְדִים בְּרוֹמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, words that stand at the top of the world. עוֹמְדִים בְּרוֹמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם means it's a very noble and exalted thing, the highest of the high. It means that if we talk about *maasim tovim*, about opportunities for accomplishment in our career in this world, we don't have to look far. We'll find it in the *siddur*. Only that בְּנֵי אָדָם מְזַלְזְלִין בָּהֶן – *people underestimate that opportunity (Brachos 6b).*

Spilling Blood in the Shul

I've said it before, that it's a cancer, this sickness of what we are doing with our *davening* today. It's one of the greatest failings in Jewish life today, the tragedy of good people, idealistic people committed to a life of serving Hashem, and yet, we fail to utilize one of the biggest opportunities that life can offer to anybody: the success that one gains from a career of *tefillah*.

It's a great pity! Because when you pray without understanding what *tefillah* can do for you, a big part of your life is wasted. You're like the one who is making *shechitas chutz*; every day you're squandering the *korbanos* of *tefillah*. It means you'll go through all the motions of *davening*; it looks like *tefillah* but it's not. It's דָּם שֶׁפָּדָךְ because every day you're standing Shachris, you're standing Mincha, you're standing Maariv, but what are you getting from it? You're losing opportunities all the time! And therefore, to restore *tefillah* to its proper place should be one of our highest aspirations.

The Rav Miller Specialty

Now we won't be able to do that in one night. It's a big undertaking. We would first of all have to learn what the words mean. There are deep things there and they deserve to be studied. The *siddur* is one of the great opportunities of life but you have to *know* it in order to make use of this opportunity.

By the way, I would like to talk about the *siddur* at length but I know it would be boring for you. On *tefillah*, I would like to talk for a whole year – an entire year only on the subject of prayer! I have it written down at home; it's one of my specialties.

We could take every word and analyze it; we could study it deeply and it would be worth every minute. But I'm not going to speak about that now.

The details, the words, we'll leave that for now. Tonight I want to talk to you about the more comprehensive achievements we can gain from *tefillah*. To clarify some of the opportunities of *tefillah*; opportunities that if we ignore them it's **יָהֵשֵׁב דָּם** – it's one of the great opportunities of life that we are misusing.

To Know or Not to Know

Now everybody who stands *Shemoneh Esrei* believes in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. There's no question about that; otherwise you have better things to do with your time – anything is better than talking to a wall. So if you're standing there, if you're saying the words, absolutely you're a believer, a *maamin*.

And nevertheless it pays to note that we're told, **בְּשִׂאתָהּ עוֹמֵד לְהִתְפַּלֵּל דַּע**, **לְפָנַי מִי אֲתָה עוֹמֵד** – *when you stand up to say Shemoneh Esrei know before Whom you stand* (Brachos 28b). It seems superfluous. What does that mean 'know'? Don't we know? Every little boy, every little girl knows.

But the truth is we don't know. Because 'דַּע – know' means something different; it means you should gain **רְעֵת**, a clear picture.

Davening for Daas

And that's why *davening* is so important. It's a mistake people make – they think *davening* is to get something, to get *parnassah*, or health or a *shidduch* or children or whatever it is. No, that's not true. It is true but that's only a *tafel*, a side benefit. The primary achievement of *davening* is *daas*, Awareness of Hashem. That's why you *daven* *Shemoneh Esrei*. Actually that's why you need things in the first place; that's why you need a *shidduch* and a *refuah* and *parnassah* and everything – so that you'll stand up to *daven* and acquire *daas*.

So **בְּשִׂאתָהּ עוֹמֵד לְהִתְפַּלֵּל דַּע לְפָנַי מִי אֲתָה עוֹמֵד** means when you get up to *daven*, make a plan beforehand to try to know before Whom you're standing. Try and picture that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is standing right in front of you and He's listening intently to your words.

Am I Talking to the Wall?

It's not easy. The *Mesilas Yesharim* says that it's not an easy thing to impress upon your mind that Somebody is actually listening; **כִּי אֵין הַחוּשׁ**; **מְסִיעַ לְזֶה**, *because our senses do not help us*. You're standing in front of a wall maybe; you see nothing in front of you and you're saying words.

But when you put effort into it, when you keep on trying, after a while it's possible to gain the attitude that Hashem is right in front of you, and He's listening.

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That's why the words **כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ** are so important. "You, Hashem, are listening." Yes, You are really listening, no question about it. We're the ones not listening! We don't listen carefully to what we are saying but He is always listening.

The Goldmine

We have a sympathetic ear. **כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תִּפְלֵת עִמָּד יִשְׂרָאֵל** - You listen to the words, **בְּרַחֲמִים**, with compassion. Only that we have to work to gain that attitude. It won't happen by itself. Say, **אָתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ** - Oh, Hashem! I'm not talking to the wall or to my *siddur*. You're listening to me! I'm really talking to You!"

So Hashem says, "You're saying that? You really mean it? If you're saying that, then I'm going to make you *feel* that I'm listening to you. I'll help you out. And each *tefillah* I'll help you more." And so those words, **כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ** are a gold mine of *daas*.

Gold Mines Galore

The truth is that the word **אַתָּה** - 'You', on its own, whenever you say the word 'You' in the *davening*, it's a gold mine. That's why the best way would be if you're able to spend a long time on that word. You'd stop at *Atah* every time and think, "Atah?! You?! From where do I get the boldness to say 'You' to the Creator?! It's *chutzpah*; it's a frightening word. But He gives me permission because I'm his child." You're His son, you're His daughter, so you can say, 'You' to Hashem. You have to spend time thinking about that.

Don't just say it as if in a dream, mumbling. You! *Atah!* You! You! It's a tremendous word, a very powerful word. 'Powerful' I mean to give you a new mind, to give you *daas*.

And once you get into the habit, every word becomes a privilege. A pleasure; it's like honey on the tongue as you're talking to your Best Friend.

Don't Be Tibetan

Only what happens? We don't listen to the words we're saying and it's a waste, a tragedy. We become dulled by habit and finally we settle on the Tibetan method of *davening*.

I told you once what the Tibetan method is. They write out on a long scroll all of their *tefillahs* and they wrap it around a spindle and there's a greased axel there and the monk gives it a twirl and it goes around many times. And each time it goes around, you have credit for a whole *tefillah*. Each time the wheel turns so a long *v'hu rachum* is said by him and it goes down to the Tibetan heaven.

So what do they do, the really pious ones? They have a whole row of these wheels and they walk back and forth - they're joking and talking,

telling stories with their fellow monks but while they're doing that, as they pass by a wheel they give it a spin and another prayer goes down to their demon-god. And the wheels don't stop a second because they're expert *daveners*; they keep on walking back and forth each time they give a twirl. That's the ideal, that's the real ideal of praying by rote. And it's a tragedy when we try to imitate that, *lehavdil*.

Know, Know and Know Some More

But when a person will live with the opposite attitude, so each time he *davens* he decides that at least something he's going to take away from this opportunity; and so each time he practices thinking that He's actually standing before the Shechina. When he says אַתָּה – 'You', he tries to picture what 'You' means – 'You' means You; you're talking to Someone.

And as the days and the months go by, he gains more and more that great achievement of *daas Hashem*. That's what the Tanna meant when he exhorted us, בְּשִׂאֲתָהּ עוֹמֵד לְהִתְפַּלֵּל: 'Please,' he said, 'don't waste that glorious opportunity of standing up to daven.' דַּע לְפָנֶי מִי אַתָּה עוֹמֵד – 'Do something with that *tefillah*; gain a little more *daas* about Who you're standing in front of.'

Every *tefillah* you know more and more that you're standing in front of Him. Shachris you're here, Mincha a little higher, Maariv, a little more. The next day, you start from where you left off. It's like polishing up your *neshama*. First you polish up the dirt that's encrusted on the mirror of the *neshama*; and little by little your *neshama* begins to become bright and transparent (Chovos Halvovos, Cheshbon Hanefesh 4). And finally the *daas* starts coming; it's shining through.

Part III. Reclaiming Prayer

Serving False Gods

Now, there's a *Shaar Habitachon* in Chovos Halvovos which is famous for that subject – it's the textbook for this great ideal – and he tells us there that it is absolutely necessary to work on acquiring the attitude of *bitachon*. Because if you don't, in case a person never works on it, then he is an *oved avodah zarah*; that's what the Chovos Halvovos says. By default *he's an idolater*, because he thinks that without Hashem it goes on anyhow.

What is he worshiping? A false god called nature. Or the false god called himself. Or the false god called his college degree or his doctor or medication or the policeman. Whatever it is, it's plain *avodah zarah* unless you work on acquiring the attitude that everything you have or need, or think you need, is only from *Atah, You*.

Now when will you work on that? You'll never do it. If you learn *Shaar Habitachon*, very good; but how many people do that? Chovos Halvovos is not such an easy subject. And even if you *do* learn it, it's not enough – you have to practice it.

Practice in Prayer

And where do we practice it most frequently? In *davening*. That's what *tefillah* is after all; *bitachon*. You have to believe in Hashem that He is the only One that can help you, otherwise, why are you asking Him? What are you wasting time in the shul for? Go out and hustle! Go to the doctor! Go to the *shadchan*!

The answer is, He's the *Shadchan* and He's the Doctor and He's the One Who will requite your hustling. Of course you should go to the doctor; you should call the *shadchan*, but at the same time you have to know that it's only Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He's the א-ל עֵלְיִן; He's the One pulling all the strings.

Now the truth is it's an attitude that we're very far away from but that's what *davening* is for; it's for *daas* and *bitachon*. Because even if you're still down at the bottom – you're not yet a person of *bitachon*; you can't even say by heart the seven requirements that the Chovos Halvovos lists as the *hakdamah* to *bitachon* – but when you appeal to Hashem for help, that outward act makes you feel that Hashem is the One Who has to help you.

The mere fact that you are asking Hashem, *and you're trying to do it with the purpose of gaining that quality of bitachon*, it changes you. By means of asking and thanking and asking more and thanking more, so you start climbing the ladder of *bitachon*. Little by little you're getting that attitude that Hashem is the One, the only One, Who gives.

Bent-Kneed Blessings

And so besides for the word *Atah* we come now to the next most important word in the Shemoneh Esrei. It's the word that is found together with *Atah* most frequently: בָּרַךְ.

Boruch! What does the word '*boruch*' mean? So we say it means 'blessed'. But fundamentally, the word *boruch* means "we bend our knees to You." It comes from the word *berech*, which means a knee. *Boruch* means 'the One to Whom our knees are bent'.

When you're humbled in gratitude what do you say? You say thank you, thank you and thank you. That's all you can say. What else can you do for Hakadosh Baruch Hu? And that's why *boruch* is translated as 'blessing' – all of our blessings are from You – but actually it means 'I am humbled before You because You are giving me what I cannot repay'.

The Ninety-Nine Percenters

So, for example, when you say אַתָּה הוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דָּעוּת, you're reminded that if it wasn't for Hakadosh Baruch Hu you'd be a raving lunatic. Don't think "I'm sane. I was born sane. I have to be sane." You don't have to be anything.

Insanity is very prevalent *chas veshalom*. A great part of the populace is suffering from it, whether they're institutionalized or not. So many people, men and women, can't get married because they have quirks in their mind; and they're suffering. So many people cannot earn a living. They can't adjust to others.

Sanity is a tremendous gift! So you don't have it a hundred percent? Ninety five percent is also very good. And so *boruch* means that my knees are bent to You, Hashem, for every minute that You're giving me *daas*. And the more you thank, the more you think about that when you say בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הוֹנֵן הַדָּעוּת, the more you're using *tefillah* for it's purpose.

The Healthy Bent-Kneed

All the *brachos* are the same. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' רופֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל. 'Oh, Hashem, I thank You so much for my health!' Does a person realize how many hundreds of thousands of complicated situations take place in his body every day? And every one is *mamesh* a miracle.

It's worthwhile looking once in a while into the big textbooks on diseases. There are so many diseases that the physicians are not able to cure. Some are serious and some not but there are so many for which they know no cause, no known cause. This syndrome and that syndrome – names they have plenty but they don't know the cause and they don't know how to cure it. They won't tell it to you like that, but it's a fact. If you read the books it will open up your eyes.

And so if you're more or less healthy, use those words in the *tefillah* to feel bent-kneed to the One Who gave it to you. And beg Him that it should stay that way. If you have health, you should be very much concerned about holding onto it because every little corner of your body is susceptible *chas veshalom*. And so you must ask that all the *pratim* should be in perfect harmony because the smallest part of your body, if it wouldn't function correctly could *chas veshalom* make life miserable. You need Hakadosh Baruch Hu on your side to keep you well. Nothing else will help.

Thanking for Repentance

You're thanking Him too for helping you do *teshuva*. How many of your acquaintances, friends from when you were a teenager went lost? I think back to when I was fourteen. I had friends who went away; but Hakadosh Baruch Hu saved me. He sent the right *rebbeim*. He sent me to Europe to learn in the yeshiva.

And so 'boruch' means that you're thinking, 'I'm indebted to You for helping me do *teshuvah*, for sending me the right *seforim*, the right *rebbeim*. I have a *frum* family, a *frum* wife and good *frum* children. I'm so grateful to You, Hashem.'

Hiding the Insurrectionists

וְלֹמַרְשֵׁינִים – Don't say there's nothing to thank for. How many Jews have fallen into great troubles because of *mosrim*! A man, a big *tzaddik*, had a big business where he employed many Jews. Many *shomrei Shabbos* families had *parnassah* because of him.

But some *malshin* reported him to the government and he's in *gehakte tzaros* now. He had some workers who were not paid on the books and they didn't take any taxes off it. He's in trouble and he's trying now to save himself.

Don't think it can't happen. Don't think you're immune. Everyone has something they don't want the government to know. So Who's saving you? Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He's behind the scenes pulling strings for you. So if you're not spending big money now on lawyers trying to defend yourself from the government you have to bend your knees to Hashem every day for that.

IRS Arois!

Not just once. You can thank for that again by אֶת עֲמוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם! I bend my knees to You for *shalom* – *shalom* from the IRS, absolutely. We need Hashem's help to find the right accountants; accountants with good heads who know how to outsmart the IRS. Legally, I mean; with the loopholes. But we need Hashem's help for that too. *Boruch Atah Hashem* that I wasn't audited this year. That's *shalom*, absolutely!

Even that you crossed the street today and you didn't get hit by a car *chas veshalom*. Think about that before you say 'boruch' of the last *bracha*. How many streets did I cross safely today? Just on the way to the shul it was one, two, three. And the whole day yesterday? More than you can count on your fingers.

Traffic, by the way, is the worst enemy today. More than the pickpockets and the ones who carry guns in their pockets and the other kind who have knives in their socks, more than that is traffic. There are *meshugenehs* on the street today – even on the sidewalk you're not always safe. Think about that when you say *boruch* at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

Making Amidah Great Again

Each blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* has to be utilized that way. I told you only some *roshei perakim*, some general ideas; there's so much more to think about, so many *brachos*. Only that we have to activate our mind and

think and think. And as we practice this day in, day out, one *tefillah* after another, so little by little it gets into our thick heads. *Boruch, boruch, boruch, boruch* – I’m becoming more and more bent-kneed before the Giver. *Atah, Atah, Atah* – before You! I’m talking to You!

Otherwise we are wasting our lives. Day after day, three times a day, we’re rattling off these words, glorious opportunities, and we’re not utilizing them; that’s called **שְׁחִטָּה חֲצוּט**. It’s the same as *shechutei chutz* because we’re taking what could have been the greatest of achievements and squandering it for nothing.

But when you recognize the opportunity and you pray to Hashem properly, you’re going to bring forth from your hearts a greatness that has no end. We don’t have to go outside and search for greatness and put it into our hearts – it’s already there! We have endless stores of spiritual energy inside of us. The *emunah*, that’s ‘*Atah*’, and the *bitachon*, that’s ‘*boruch*’ – are buried in our *neshamah* only that we have to make use of that tremendous opportunity that *tefillah* gives us.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let’s Get Practical

Growing Through Prayer

The sin of *shechitas chutz* is considered so severe because it is the loss of an opportunity for the greatness of coming close to Hashem. Similarly, when we miss the opportunities afforded by our daily prayers, it is a great tragedy. This week I will *bli neder* take a minute each morning to prepare for the great opportunity of prayer, reviewing in my mind the lessons of “*Boruch*”, and of “*Atah*”. At night I will pause for a minute to review my day and see if I have taken advantage of my opportunities as I should have.

This week’s booklet is based on tapes:

135 - Calling In Truth | **300** - Power of Prayer | **864** - Seven Objectives of Tefillah
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QUESTION

What should have been the proper reaction of the Jews in Tel-Aviv to the missile attacks this week?

ANSWER

They should have huddled in their rooms in fear of Hashem, no question about it. It was a time to make an accounting.

When a scud missile fell on Tel-Aviv, so the mayor of Tel-Aviv should have thought about what he said in defiance of the Orthodox Jews. The Orthodox Jews wanted to make a law that all places of amusement should be closed on Shabbos. So the mayor of Tel-Aviv said, "Nothing doing! In Tel-Aviv, I'll see to it that every Friday night all these places, the cafes and the theaters will be open all night long." So when the scud fell on Tel-Aviv, he should have said, he should have announced, "I changed my mind." Because that's the purpose!

You think that's the end? I'm telling you, it's only the beginning. Saddam Hussein is only the first shot in the great battle against the evil that holds sway in Eretz Yisroel. It's only the first shot! Hashem is not finished at all. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent a warning. But for people who refuse to listen, He might have to send another one.

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