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IN MEMORY OF MRS. CLARA CHOPP A"H AND MENUCHA MARKOWITZ A"H

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

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Continues on the next page...

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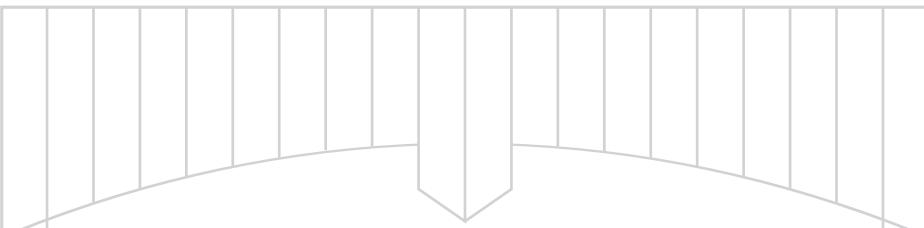
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WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

HOUSE OF THANKSGIVING

CONTENTS:

- Part II. Thanksgiving and the Table - 5
- Part II. Thanksgiving, the Menorah and the Mizbeiah - 10
- Part III. Thanksgiving in Shul - 15

Part II. Thanksgiving and the Table

Looking Under the Hood

When we begin our talk tonight about this week's *sedrah*, about the *Mishkan*, we must give credit to one of the *chachomim* of two doros back who taught us an important Torah principle that serves as an introduction to our subject. Rav Simcha Zissel, *zichrono livracha*, said that when studying a *mitzvah*, it's necessary *לְהַפְּשִׁיט אֶת הַצְּרוּהָ* – to take off the outward form; it means that we are expected to remove the *chitzoniyus* of the *mitzvah* and see what is the *pnimiyus*, the essence of the subject that was intended by Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Now when we utilize this method of studying the *Mishkan* not only will we bring to life an important part of our history, but we'll see that

something that has long been destroyed and maybe we imagined is no longer relevant to our daily lives, is actually more relevant than anything else. And that's because the Mishkan serves as a model for the shuls, for our battei kneisiyos which are the Mikdash Me'at – they are our own small mishkan that stand for us with the same purpose as the original one in our parsha.

Dovid Uncovers the Truth

Now, if we want to make an attempt at removing the outward form of the Mishkan and understand something of its *pnimiyus* it would pay for us to study the words of Dovid Hamelech. Because Dovid composed an especial song for the occasion of the Beis Hamikdash's dedication, kepitel 30. And if Dovid made a *shir* especially in honor of that important occasion, we would expect that whatever we read there should be an illumination of that subject; it should help us understand something about the function of the House of Hashem.

Only we're surprised that when we look into that *shir*, we see not one word is mentioned about the Beis Hamikdash except the title: **מְקוֹמָךְ שִׁיר חֲנַכְתָּה הַבֵּית לְרוֹר**, and that's the end of it. After that short introduction, it talks about something else and doesn't mention the Beis Hamikdash even once.

Off Topic?

Now, it's very important that we should understand that puzzle because we wouldn't have made the *shir* in that manner. After all, there's so much to talk about when it comes to the Beis Hamikdash; the *kedusha*, the Shechina, **וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם**, the *keilim* and the *korbanos*, the *kohanim* and the *avodah*. But not one word is mentioned. And if that's the case, if Dovid chose to speak about something else, we have to understand that.

So let's pay attention first to what he does say. Right away he begins speaking about gratitude, about thanking Hashem for what He did for him: **כִּי רְלִيقָנָה** – I will exalt You, Hashem, **אֶרְאֶמְךָ הָ** – because You lifted me up. I was a nobody. I came from Moav, from a low nation. My *yichus* was a very poor *yichus*. I had a *kupah shel sheratzim* on my back, a lot of skeletons in the closet, and still You elevated me; You chose me and made me Your Moshiach, the *melech*.

And then I had enemies all my life, **וְלֹא שָׁמַחְתָּ אַיִּבְיִ לִ** – but You didn't let my enemies rejoice over me. **הַ אַלְקִי שְׁוֹעַתִּי אֶלְךָ** – I cried out to You many times in my life, **וְתַּפְאַרְנִי** – and You healed me.

The Bottom Line

Now, that's only the beginning, but when you read that entire *shir*, you see it's one big narration of gratitude, *hakaros hatov*. Dovid is pouring out his heart in thanks to Hashem all the way till the last words. You know, when you write a *shtar*, so you have to be *chozer beshitah achronah*, to sum up the contents of the document on the last line. Like they say in America: "What's the bottom line?" And what's the bottom line of this *mizmor*? **השָׁמַע אֱלֹקִי לְעֹלָם אָזְדָּךְ** – Hashem, I'm going to thank You forever.

And so Dovid is telling us here a very big *chiddush*; he's saying the purpose of the Beis Hamikdash is to thank Hashem. "You want to know why I'm doing all of this?" sings Dovid. "You want to know why I applied myself to gathering together all the materials for the building of the Beis Hamikdash? I did it for one purpose; to thank Hashem!"

That's what the Beis Hamikdash is for. **אָרוּמָתָךְ הִיא** – I'm going to exalt You Hashem. How will I exalt You? I'll build for You a Beis Hamikdash which, just like the Mishkan, will be a place to express my gratitude to You.

Come In With Gratitude

Just to bring out the point more, so you'll see what I'm talking about, if you look in Dovid Hamelech's famous *shir* about thanksgiving, you see the same story: **מִזְמָר לְתַשְׁבָּח** – Here's a song especially for thanksgiving; and right away he's talking about the Mikdash. **בָּאוּ לְפָנֵינוּ בְּרִנָּה** – Come before Him with song, **בָּאוּ שְׁעִירִי בְּתַשְׁבָּח** – Come into His gates with thanksgiving. Which gates? Of the Beis Hamikdash or the Mishkan, whatever it was. **חַזְוֹתָיו בְּתַחְלָה** – You come in to His precincts with thanksgiving. (*ibid.* 100:1). So when you come in, you come in with a purpose of *todah*, of thanksgiving.

Now that is how we have to understand the purpose of not only the Beis Hamikdash, but all the appointments of the Mikdash. All the details of the Mishkan that we read about in this week's *sedrah*, are expressions primarily of thanksgiving.

Now it's a big *chiddush*, but we have to learn that *chiddush* and study it and practice it too – we'll soon see how we should practice it in our lives. It's a very important subject for us and so we'll take a few examples and **יִשְׁמַע חֲכָם וַיֹּסֶף לְקַח** – once you understand that gratitude and thanksgiving is the common denominator, you yourself will be able to see from these examples more examples of your own.

The Secret of the Table

In the Mishkan, one of the *keilim* was the Table. **וְשִׁבְתִּית שְׁלֹחַ עַצְיִ שְׁטִים** – You should make a golden Table of *atzei shittim* overlaid with gold (Shemos 25:23). Now I have to tell you beforehand, I must apologize because the Rambam says he doesn't understand the idea of the *Shulchan* with *Lechem Hapanim*. He has no explanation. And here, along comes a nobody who will give an explanation. But what can I do? I can't help myself. I'll tell you an explanation.

On that golden Table, they put the *Lechem Hapanim*, twelve loaves of bread. And these loaves are our expression of gratitude to Hashem. The *Shulchan* and the bread are a *מִזְמָר לְתֹרֶה* for the great *nes* of *lechem*.

Hamotzee Lechem Min Ha'avir

If you ever studied any science, you know it's a big *nes*. Bread comes out of nowhere, not *min ha'aretz*. The *aretz* gives only a tiny contribution to the *lechem*. The *lechem* actually comes out of the air! This air makes *lechem*. It's *mavhil*. You become excited when you hear that. That's what they know now. It's *nissei nissim*!

How does air become bread? Carbon dioxide in the air combines with the sunshine. You're eating sunshine when you eat bread; that's what it is. Sunshine joins with the carbon dioxide with some water and with the chlorophyll, the green part of the plant, and it combines and it makes starch. That starch is the wheat; that's *cheilev chitah*, the fat of the wheat. That's the bread. It comes out of the air!

So you'll ask me a question: Isn't carbon dioxide only three parts in ten thousand in the air? And the plant is standing here sucking the carbon dioxide from the air around it. In a minute, it has exhausted all the carbon dioxide; so the plant should die. No! Hakadosh Baruch Hu made the wind. **אל מלָא קָרוֹחֹת אֵין קָשָׁוֹל מַתְקִים** – Without the winds, the world couldn't exist. The wind keeps the air moving. So as the plant exhausts the carbon dioxide from the air around it, the wind pushes some new air into place and the carbon dioxide is replenished – *nissei nissim*!

Wonder Bread

And so, this piece of *lechem* is such a composite, a complex of so many miracles that we have to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu not for one *nes* – we have to thank Him for hundreds and hundreds of *nissim*.

Now when we say hundreds, I'm underestimating. I don't want to take up the time and tell you how many actual *nissim* there are in the making

of food. It's so many that you'll think it's exaggerated. "A *guzmah*," you'll say. You won't even believe me. You need millions of details to cooperate to make bread.

That's why when you have a piece of bread at the table and somebody says give me this piece of bread, you don't throw it to him. **אַنְזַרְקִין אֶת הַפַּת** – You can't throw bread. *Derech eretz!* Be polite with the bread! It's Hakadosh Baruch Hu's miracle.

Would you throw let's say *urim v'tumim*?! Let's say the *Kohen Gadol* said to you, "Hand me the *urim v'tumim* please," would you throw it? You would take it with the biggest *derekh eretz*, with *hachna'ah* you'd hold it in you hand. The piece of bread is more *nissim* than the *urim v'tumim* – more *nissim*! We're accustomed to bread. The *urim v'tumim* is such a rare miracle, but bread is no less. It's bigger – much bigger!

Excited About Nissim

So when you see a piece of bread on your table, you have to be excited about it.

"How can I be excited?" he says. "I eat every day."

So Hashem says, "It's My fault? I want you to be happy, not to be hungry. Just because I'm giving you every day therefore you shouldn't be excited? You want Me to give it to you once in ten years?" So learn to be excited! You have to learn to be excited about a piece of bread.

And Hashem makes it taste good too! Bread tastes good! You know, once you put the bread in your mouth, the saliva combines with the starch of the bread and it turns into sugars. You know that? That's why the more you chew it, the sweeter the bread becomes. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to make that you enjoy the bread. He gives it *b'chein b'chesed*. It's a pleasure when you eat bread. I'm not saying you should become a gourmet, a *ba'al ta'avah*, but you're eating bread anyhow.

And you're eating it *tamid*, always! That's why it says **וַיְנַתֵּן עַל הַשְּׁלֹחַן** (ibid. 25:30). *Tamid* means Hashem is always giving bread. Every day, He gives bread and therefore it's on the table *tamid*. And when the *Kohanim* come on Shabbos to remove the bread, they have to be *mekayem* the *tamid*. They can't just take it off. So as they're taking off the old bread, they're pushing on the new bread and so immediately the new bread is there already; even the smallest interruption shouldn't be. So you see how important it is to be reminded of that. We do a big procedure

on the *Shulchan* so that we should be reminded to thank that we get our bread *tamid* without the slightest interruption.

The Shulchan and Us

And so when we talk about the *Shulchan* and the *Lechem Hapanim*, let's keep in mind that its primary purpose is to *mechayev* us, to obligate us to keep in our minds always to express our gratitude to Hashem.

That's the result of being *mafshit* the *tzurah* of the *Shulchan* – the golden Table in the *Mishkan* is an expression of our gratitude and a reminder that we're *mechuyev* to express our gratitude every day to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for our daily bread. What's in the *Mishkan* is only a *mashal* what you should do. Whenever we put bread on our table we should stop and say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "We thank You! **אֶתְזֶרֶת מְמַתָּךְ**, for our daily bread, for the *nissei nissim*!"

Part II. Thanksgiving, the Menorah and the Mizbeiaħ

The Burning Flame

Now if we keep on going with this *svara* of being *mafshit* the *tzurah* of the *Beis Hamikdash* in order to uncover the ideals hidden underneath, we come to the *Menorah* and we'll see that this also was for gratitude. Inside the *Mishkan* at night, everything was quiet—the *avodah* was not carried on. But there was one thing in particular that was evident; all night there were flames burning on the *Menorah*.

Now, I must say beforehand that whatever we are going to say – although it may be very important and very necessary – is going to be superficial. I am too little of a person to undertake to interpret such a big and splendid subject. However, we do have some clues.

The Flame of Life

There's a *possuk* **נֵר ה' נְשָׁמָת אָדָם** – the lamp of Hashem is a man's soul. It's Hashem's light that is burning inside you, giving you life and we wouldn't be mistaken if we said that the flame of the *Menorah* is intended to symbolize that flame burning inside you.

Now, without recourse to any other sources, we would think that it's referring to the soul and we're thanking for the gift of the *neshama*. But

there's a queer statement in the Gemara that seems to be a contradiction to this. In Mesichta Shabbos a question is asked: Suppose it's Friday night and a sick man is lying next to an oil lamp and it's a matter of *pikuach nefesh*; to save his life, you have to put out the lamp. Is it *mutar* to put out a lamp for a sick man? That's a question the Gemara asks.

And the answers is given as follows: מוטב – It's better to extinguish the lamp created by a person, ברוך הוא נרו של הקורש – and the lamp of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, a Jewish life, shouldn't be extinguished. And the Gemara brings this possuk, that a man's living soul is compared to a lamp.

The Flame Extinguished

But there's a big question here because how can the Gemara compare the death of a person to the lamp of Hashem going out? If the Jew would *chalilah* die, does the lamp go out? *Chas v'shalom!* After a man's days are over and he takes off his old overcoat, his worn out flesh and bones, his soul goes marching on; the light burns on and on. It burns brightly – even more brightly. Death means only that you move on; the word מות is the same word as שׁוֹמֵן, to move away. You move out of the world. You change your place – that's all. But the light of your *neshama* still burns.

But the Gemara here says that when he dies his lamp, the *ner Elokim*, is extinguished! And so we learn from this Gemara a big *chiddush* about this possuk; we learn a different meaning in the words "lamp of Hashem." *Ner Elokim* does not mean the soul in general; it means *a man's life in this world*. And a Jewish life in this *Olam Hazeh* is actually extinguished forever when he dies. Because what is the life of a Jew in this world? It's *bechira*, free will, the opportunity to choose, and that lamp will never again be re-lit.

What he'll do in the Next World is a different story. That's *schar Olam Haba*, that's reward; but the ability to achieve in this life is an especial form of light included in the lamp of Hashem, the *neshama*, and this goes out when a man dies never to be rekindled again even at the revival of the dead. It's only while your flame is burning in *Olam Hazeh*, this one time, that you have the opportunity to utilize the free will to achieve. And that's called the light of the soul; life in this world! That's the *chiddush* of the Gemara.

And therefore while we have it there's no greater happiness. The happiness of life means not running around on Caribbean cruises, no! I always tell you that there's nothing better in the Caribbean islands. Only bigger cockroaches they have there, that's all. Also, Caribbean diseases;

that's also a specialty of the islands. That's not enjoying life. Enjoying life means, "Ah! Baruch Hashem, I'm alive! Right here in good old Brooklyn I'm alive!"

The Perpetual Mazel Tov

I'll tell you a story. I told it many times.

In Lomza, the *mashgiach* once saw a sad-faced yeshiva *bachur*. So he went over to him and he took him by both lapels. "Mazel Tov," he said to him.

The *bachur* wanted to hear the good news. The *mashgiach* says, "Mazel tov! Mazel Tov! Mazel tov!"

The *bachur* was looking at him; what's the *mazel tov*? Finally after many *mazel tovs*, the *mashgiach* said, "Mazel tov! You're alive!"

That's the biggest *mazel tov*! If you're alive, there's hope! You can accomplish everything. **כִּי לְבָלֶב חַי הַזֶּה טֹוב מִהָּאָרִיה הַמַּתָּה** – A living dog is better than a dead lion. Even if you're like a dog, you're a low person who didn't accomplish yet, but you're still alive! You can choose to do *mitzvos*! You can learn Torah! You could become a *tzaddik gadol*! Life is the most precious thing there is because you can still choose!

And therefore, how important it is for a person to learn to be grateful to Hashem that he's alive. And that is symbolized by the lights of the Menorah in the Mikdash. They burn brightly all the time to remind us of that gift – just as the lights are burning there *tamid*, always, in our hearts also there should burn always a fiery *hakaros hatov* to Hashem that the lamp of life, of *bechira* and opportunity, is burning within us.

A Minute of Life

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 that the *menorah* of light is burning, the *ner Hashem* is burning within you – you're still alive! Ah! *Chasdei Hashem*! Every minute is so precious, more than **כָּל חַיִּים עַזְלָם הַבָּא**!

And don't think that only if you do big things with that minute. You might say, "Well, it's only if I do big things, big *mitzvos* with my life." No. Every minute, every little *avodas Hashem* is called utilizing your life for its purpose. If that minute you're thinking of thanksgiving to Hashem, you're grateful to Hashem, that itself is a tremendous achievement! Every little bit, every time you think about *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – you're thanking

Him or you're reminding yourself that He is watching you or you're thinking that you love Him —whatever it is, that's called living successfully. That's what makes life worth living! And therefore when we think of the Menorah, let's always be grateful for that gift of life, the great light of *bechira*, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu bestows upon us every day.

Now, I wish I had the time to talk about the Menorah a little longer because it is a splendid subject that lends itself to many important lessons. I wanted to tell you that included in the *remez* of that burning flame in the *heichal*, included in that gift of life in *Olam Hazeh*, is the light of *seichel*.

Why is the light of the soul — it means our existence in this world — compared to a light? Why isn't it compared to water? It could be compared to the wind; other comparisons. Why a lamp? And the answer is that a lamp has as its chief function the ability to see, to discern. And that's the purpose of being alive. Our functioning mind bestows the opportunity to see objects, to gain understanding, to accomplish wisdom.

Without the gift of *seichel* we couldn't choose — it's like being dead. *Chas v'shalom*, sometimes when someone gets old, so many good people are *oiver u'batul*, *chas v'shalom*. It's like they're dead. He can't think, he can't utilize his *bechira*.

Gratitude for Daas

Here's a man, I was once walking in a street when I was a boy on the East Side. It was Asara b'Teves; an old *rebbe*, he had a *shtibel*, met me. He said to me, "Vu voin ich?" "Where do I live?" he asked me. *Rachmanus*; he forgot where he lives. And I had to take him by the hand, this old *rebbe*, and lead him to his house. He forgot his address.

And so we have to be grateful that the flame of the *menorah*, of *seichel*, of *zikaron*, of *daas* and *machshava* burns brightly in our brain. That was the purpose of the Menorah's flame that burned *tamid* in the *heichal*; so we should be reminded *tamid* to be grateful for the gift of life, a life of *seichel* and *bechira* in this world, that gives us eternal life in the Next World forever.

On to the Mizbeiaach

I would talk more about the Menorah but the time doesn't allow it and so we'll talk about the *Mizbeyach*. You know, the *Mizbeyach* to many people is really a quandary. It's blood and entrails and burning flesh, and it's a puzzle to some people what the purpose is. But it's a *mitzvah*, it's part of *avodas Hashem*, and therefore it pays to understand it. We should make

an attempt to appreciate the *pnimiyus* of what it is all about by following the principle of what Dovid Hamelech taught us is the purpose of all the appurtenances of the Mikdash.

And so we'll say the following. When you take a sheep or some other *beheima* as a *korban*, and you slaughter it and put it down on the *Mizbeyach*, *lefi hapashtus k' bipshuto*, the most simple meaning is that you're offering yourself up on the *Mizbeyach*.

What do I mean 'yourself'? Exactly that! It's a vicarious offering of yourself. Because it's not enough that we feel indebted to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for life itself, for *bechira* and *seichel* and all the opportunities that life gives us, but we have to thank Hashem for our body too. To live like a person with the great organization called the body requires a certain amount of gratitude.

Self-Oblation

And so a *korban* means that you're taking yourself and you're giving yourself back to Hakadosh Baruch Hu in gratitude. After all, He gave you a body, a body so wonderful, and you had it for so long already. If you're twenty years old, twenty years is a very long time. If you've been using this gift for fifty years or sixty years, even more so. And so why shouldn't we give ourselves back to Him in gratitude? Wouldn't that be the best, most sincere expression of thanksgiving?

And so what do you do? You bring a lamb. A poor little lamb is a live creature and his heart is pumping the blood throughout his body and wants to live. And you cut its neck and the blood that was keeping it alive comes pouring out. And you take from the blood and you put it on the *Mizbeyach* and you're thinking, "That is me; this is instead of me. Baruch Hashem that I'm not on the *Mizbeyach*. Baruch Hashem that Hashem didn't demand of me such a sacrifice. Baruch Hashem, He gives me my body every day and He lets me keep it."

We keep our *cheilev*, fats, in ourselves. We keep our *klayos*, our kidneys, for ourselves. Our heads and legs and stomach, everything we keep and we use them every day. Instead we offer up on the *Mizbeyach* an *olah* — we burn the whole body to Hashem. And when it goes up to Hashem, it's like we're going up to Hashem in gratitude. The *korbanos* are an expression of the highest gratitude to Hashem for our bodies.

Breaking it Down

But not just the body as one whole; all the parts of the body. **כל עצמותי תאמרנו ה' מי במוך** – Every part of my body speaks up and says, “Hashem who is like You?” Every function of the body, every organ is *nissei nissim*. If you would study the kidney, the kidney is one of the most wonderful machines in the world. The heart? We’re amazed by the creation of such a pump that day and night it pumps without stop, so many tens of years. Every detail of the body, *nissei nissim*.

Only that if you don’t think about, it’s a general term, the body, and we lump it all together and *patur* ourselves; and we absolve ourselves from thinking about it. And so along comes the *korban* and it says that you have to separate all the limbs, all the organs, and be *makriv* them on the *Mizbeyach* separately. That’s the mitzvah of *hefshet v’nituach*; we skin and separate the limbs so they should more closely resemble the human limbs. Because **כל עצמותי תאמרנה** – every part is speaking! Every detail of the body is so wondrous that you can spend your entire life talking about it and you don’t even begin to explain even part of the miracles of the body.

The Altar of Thanksgiving

And so what is the *Mizbeyach* for? It means one thing. It means “Thank You Hashem! *Baruch Hashem* You give me my life every day and all the organs are functioning perfectly more or less.”

And so we see that like the *Shulchan* and like the *Menorah*, the *Mizbeyach* is also intended as a symbol of thanksgiving. And that’s one of the purposes of reading these *parshiyos*; so that we should utilize this principle that the *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash* are a place of **אָוֹתָמָךְ הַכִּי דְלִיתָנִי**, of raising up Hashem with our gratitude.

Part III. Thanksgiving in Shul

The Purpose of Shul

Now, once we peeled back the *chitzoniyus* of the *Mikdash* to see the *pnimiyus* underneath and we realize that it’s primarily a place of **ה אַלְפִי לְעוֹלָם אָזְרָךְ**, a place intended to be a catalyst for gratitude to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, so we can understand better now the purpose of coming to the *beis haknesses*. The *beis haknesses* after all is a *Mikdash Me’at*; it’s a symbol of the *Beis Hamikdash* and therefore when we drill down to the core, the purpose is the same.

And so when you walk into the *beis haknesses*, the first thing you have to know is, **בָּאוּ שְׁעִירִים בְּתֹרֶדֶת** – you’re coming in for the purpose of *thanksgiving* (*Tehillim 100:4*). Not merely like some people say *pshat*, “You should thank Hashem that you’re *able* to come in” – that’s true also, but that’s not the real *pshat*. You come in **בְּתֹרֶדֶת** means you come in for the purpose of giving thanks.

It’s Not What You Imagined

Now, that’s surprising to many people. They think that they come for *davening*, for *minyan*, *Pesukei D’zimrah*, *Shemoneh Esrei*, *Kaddish*, *Kedusha*, *Borchu*, whatever it is. But actually that’s only the *chitzoniyus* and when you strip it away – it doesn’t mean you’re not doing all those things; you *must*! – but when you drill down to the purpose of all those things you understand that you’re coming here to say, *I thank You Hashem for this and for that*.

ברוך אתה ה – That’s what the word *Baruch* means; it comes from the word *berech*, knee, and so *Baruch Atah* means “You are the One to Whom our knees are bent in gratitude for everything.” And even though we have to walk around all day, and even in the shul we can’t keep our knees bent all the time but *Baruch* means that *ideologically* You are the One to Whom our knees are bent perpetually.

Baruch Chonein hadaas. Baruch Rofei cholei Yisroel. Baruch, baruch, baruch. Every *bracha* that you make in *Shemoneh Esrei* is an expression of gratitude for some benefit that you’re getting every day. And even though before we say the *bracha* we first pray and we ask *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, so you might think the *beis knesses* is a place to pray, for *tefillah* and asking. It’s true but you have to know the purpose of asking is to *make us aware that Hashem is giving to us!*

The Bending is the Purpose

That’s a *chiddush* to some people but that’s what *tefillah* is for. After all, why do you need to ask? Doesn’t Hashem know what we need? Why do we ask Him? The answer is, we ask Him in order to make *ourselves* aware that He’s the One Who is the Giver. Otherwise you forget it. And therefore, in every *bracha* once you have exercised that purpose, once you asked and you clarified for yourself the understanding that it’s from Him – that’s the purpose of the words before the *bracha* – so now you’re capable of coming to the point, to the whole purpose which is the *bracha*, the thanking.

You see we don't call it *bakasha*, a request; we call it the *bracha* — *bracha* means an expression of gratitude. That's the primary purpose of davening: ה' אֱלֹקִי לְעוֹלָם אָזְךָ. And the place set aside for stimulating us to gratitude is the *beis haknesses*.

Now, if that's the purpose of the shul so therefore it require *hachana*; ה' הבן לך אתך יְשָׁרָאֵל — *Prepare yourself to meet Hashem* (Amos 4:12). When you go into the *beis haknesses*, you have to prepare yourself. You have to think back in your regular daily life and in your past life, what is there to thank for? That's the way to walk into a shul: you're thinking—“What am I going to thank for when I get to my place?

Pleasure of Locomotion

So the first thing of course is all the things He's doing for you right now. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמַּבְנִין מַצְעָרִי גָּבָר — I was able to get out of bed today and walk. Ah! A pleasure! Just walk on the street, see how many people are sitting in wheelchairs. How many people have walkers, how many people have canes, how many people are lying in bed in the houses and can't go out at all? It's a *simcha* if you're able to walk. Locomotion is a very big happiness. Baruch Hashem, you have two Rolls Royces underneath you, better than any other wheels — your own feet. It's a joy, every step. And therefore we say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמַּבְנִין מַצְעָרִי גָּבָר — You establish the footsteps of a man. How wonderful it is to be able to walk!

And סומא חשוב במתה ה' פוקח עוריים — I'm able to see! Ah! Ah! You lose so much of life when *chas v'shalom* you cannot see. And your eyes are such wonderful cameras. All the scientists admit there's no camera in the world that can compare to the eye. It's so efficient. It functions automatically; it focuses for near objects and in one second you can change focus for a distant object. It changes in the dark to allow more light to come in. When there's more light, it closes up a little so too much light shouldn't come in. It's a wonder of wonders how this camera functions. I thank You that You didn't make me a gentile. I thank You for my shoes and for my hat. I thank You for this and that.

And that's also what *pesukei d'zimra* is for. You're a little more awake now so you get busy praising and thanking. That's why you have to make a noise when you *daven Pesukei D'zimra*. If the shul is full of people and it's quiet, it's like a cemetery, that's not the *tzurah* of a shul. The *tzurah* of a Jewish shul is when there's noise. What kind of a noise? They're shouting to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. *Hodu! Ashrei! Halelukah!* For everything You're doing for me right now.

The Sin of Forgetfulness

But that's not enough. Go back! There's so much to thank for in your past. And that brings us to a very big subject now and the subject is, בָּרְכִּי נֶפֶשִׁי אַתְּ הֵ 'וְאֶל תִּשְׁכַּח בְּלַגְמֹלְלִי. Dovid is talking to himself, to his *nefesh*, and he says, "Thank Hashem! And don't forget all the things that He bestowed upon you."

And that's the very great problem of forgetting the *chasdei Hashem*. Remember you once had in your eye a throbbing feeling that bothered you for a day. Your eye was pulsating. You were worried. Should you go to the eye specialist, you shouldn't go? The next morning you got up, you forgot all about it.

You forgot all about it?! Some people don't forget. For some people it continues *chalilah* and it gets worse. Eye operations are a very big *tzara* – bandages for weeks and weeks, *chas v'shalom*. And finally when the doctors take off the bandage, not always are they happy with the results. And *baruch Hashem* that throbbing in your eye passed away during the nighttime. Can you forget that?! בָּרְכִּי נֶפֶשִׁי אַתְּ הֵ 'וְאֶל תִּשְׁכַּח בְּלַגְמֹלְלִי! Don't forget! You have to remember that all your life!

Forget Me Not

Remember when there was a man that wanted a *din Torah* against you. You were afraid. You couldn't sleep. A whole week your stomach was boiling – a *din Torah* was pending against you. At the end, nothing came of it. The other party didn't call you to a *din Torah*. So what did you do? You forgot all about it. Forgot all about it?!

Or maybe once your jaw was swollen and the swelling of your gum began to rise up here? You know sometimes, *chas v'shalom*, the infection goes to brain. Oh yes. I know an *adam gadol* who passed away. His gum became inflamed from a tooth abscess. It went up here into the brain and he passed away *nebach*.

But you were saved! בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הֵ 'אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם – You redeemed my life! You should say to Hashem, "You redeemed me!" How are people so obtuse, so ungrateful?! They ask Hashem for favors and as soon as He gives it to them, תִּשְׁכַּח בְּלַגְמֹלְלִי – they forget it toch *k'dei dibbur*.

And therefore that's a big function in our lives. בָּרְכִּי נֶפֶשִׁי אַתְּ הֵ 'וְאֶל תִּשְׁכַּח – Don't forget, בְּלַגְמֹלְלִי – even one thing that He bestowed upon you. And so you have to prepare yourself. And when you come to the *beis haknesses*,

at least in this place that's set aside for thanking, you must exercise that obligation.

Homework for Shul

Now a little homework; when you come to the *beis haknesses* and you hear *Kaddish* being said, instead of saying **יהָא שָׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מַבָּרָךְ** as a little donation; “let His Great Name be blessed” – what do you care to say it? It doesn’t cost you any money. No, that’s not the way. You have to put some thought into it in order to bless His Name. Think of one specific thing when you say **יהָא שָׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מַבָּרָךְ**.

You remember when your tooth was bothering you and it hurt you even to eat. You couldn’t eat for three days, your tooth was bothering you and you thought you had to take it out. Then all of a sudden overnight the pain subsided and the tooth functioned well once more. **יהָא שָׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מַבָּרָךְ!** You thank Hashem for that!

Remember you once made a dumb step, you stepped off the curb just as the bus nearby started moving and the bus driver pulled the brakes and cursed you? “That crazy dope! He walked in front of my bus!” He almost hit you but you walked away like a dumbbell, not even thinking. Where’s the **יהָא שָׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא** for that?!

Maybe when you were a little boy you once found a bullet. A true story – it was me. I found a bullet when I was a little boy. I took the bullet it and I stuck it between the boards of a wooden fence and I took a hammer with a nail and I banged it against the back of the bullet. It exploded in my face. My face was full of blood. Full of blood! I could have *chalilah* lost my eyes! **יהָא שָׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מַבָּרָךְ**!

All our lives we’re full of such *sakanah*; we’ve been rescued again and again and we have to never stop thanking. That’s what it means **יהָא שָׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מַבָּרָךְ!** You should do it right now! Don’t wait for the future, for **לָעַלְמָן וּלְעַלְמִינִי עַלְמִינִי**. Start right now!

Prepare for *Kaddish*

It’s a good idea to prepare as soon as the *chazzan* starts saying *yisgadel*. Think, “What am I going to thank for this time?” Think fast. It’s better of course if you thought beforehand and prepared at least one thing to thank Him for but if you didn’t then you have to think fast.

Thank Hashem that you have a wife. How many old *bochurim* waited too long and now nobody will marry them. *Baruch Hashem* that you have

normal children! Oooh! A *tzara*! I know a man who had three children, one after the other, all sick. All very sick children! A *rachmanus*! A terrible *rachmanus*! If you have normal children, you have to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for that day and night, day and night, day and night, day and night!

And some people have no children at all and they pine away their lives and they look at other people – they're so jealous. And all of you people who have children, many times you don't stop to think. Every child is a *matana*. Each child is a very big gift – it's a *ta'anug*. Of course, **מְרֻבָּה נְכָסִים**, **מְרֻבָּה דְּאֲגָה**, but we want to have more *nechasim* and we'll have some more worries too.

And therefore, how can a person who lives a normal life not be busy all of his days thanking Hashem? There's no lack of **יְהָא שְׁמֵיה֮ רַבָּא מְבָרָךְ**! Every time you say it, prepare something.

Bending and Thanking

And when we come to **מְזֻדִּים אֲנַחֲנוּ לְךָ**, certainly that's the function! **מְזֻדִּים אֲנַחֲנוּ לְךָ** – what are you thanking for? Some poskim hold if you said *Modim* without *kavana*, you're not *yotzei Shemoneh Esrei*. That's what some poskim hold. Because that's the purpose; that's *why* you're davening. **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הָ**

And so you have to think of something. It's impossible to feel gratitude with an empty head—you have to be prepared with something. There are so many things that are available. Look at all the illnesses. I once made a list of about fifty illnesses. Make such a list and it's a good idea to read it from time to time. This man has that. That woman has that. Look at the list and prepare before *Modim*. Think, “*Baruch Hashem I don't have this*.” Every *tefillah* a different thing. “*Baruch Hashem I don't have that*.”

The Secret of the Shul

And so **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הָ** and **מְזֻדִּים אֲנַחֲנוּ לְךָ** and **Borchu** and everything else that we're saying constantly in the *beis haknesses*, is for *hakaros hatov*. The *beis haknesses*, that's the especial place of this function. **הַאֲלֹקִי לְעוֹלָם אָזְךָ שִׁיר חֲנַכְתָּה הַבַּיִת** – What's the *shul* all about? **מִזְמֹר שִׁיר חֲנַכְתָּה הַבַּיִת** – Forever I'm going to thank You. That's the function, the purpose of the *beis haknesses*.

And these things, we have to know, are not a *middas chassidus*; they're a *chiyuv gamur*. That's the *pnimiyus* of the *shul*. Why do you come? Only because of thanks to Hashem. You're walking to *shul*, coming in the door,

sitting down; every step is an expression of gratitude. That's called being מפָשִׁיט אֶת הַצְּרוּרָה of the subject of the Mishkan and understanding also the subject of the Mikdash Me'at, the beis haknesses. Because the bottom line of the subject, the primary purpose of coming into the shul, is ה' אֱלֹקִים לְעֹלָם אֱנוֹךָ.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

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Let's Get Practical

Living With Gratitude in the Mikdash Me'at

This week, I will, bli neder, put into practice the teaching that the entire Mishkan and Beis Haknesses exist for one purpose – to thank Hashem. Before I walk into shul each day, I will prepare one specific thing to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for. It can be something from today – my eyesight, my ability to walk, my parnassah – or something from long ago that I had forgotten, just as Dovid HaMelech warns, “אֵל תִשְׁכֹחֵךְ כָל גָמְלוּיו”

By practicing a small amount of planned gratitude each time I enter the Mikdash Me'at, I will train myself to live the life the Mishkan teaches – a life of constant awareness of the nissei nissim that fill every moment.

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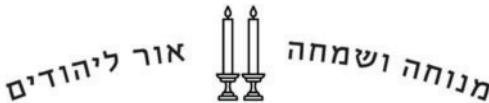
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Shabbos Inspired

לע"נ שרה נטשה בת דבורה שחין · דינה ברכה בת שרה נטשה · דבורה מזיל בת שרה נטשה

Shabbos is a Yichud Room

Shabbos is a *yichud* room—it is just us and Hashem. We even ask the angels to leave the room, saying to them: “*Tzeis’chem l’shalom, Malachi ha-shalom.*” This is because *Shabbos Kodesh* requires privacy with Hashem.

After their wedding, the *chasan* and *kallah* do not begin routine life. For instance, the husband doesn't leave the next day for kollel or work. They have a full week of *sheva berachos*, during which they're together the whole time.

On Shabbos as well, we need to create this intimacy. That's why we have a halachah on Shabbos not to speak as we do during the week. We don't sit around and talk about nonsense, since we're with Hashem all the time. We eat with Him, drink with Him, and sleep with Him. We're in Hashem's house! This is the simple reality of *Shabbos Kodesh*.

The first step in feeling the *kedushah* of Shabbos is to remove all the extraneous elements, all those things that aren't really forbidden, only “*pareve*.” My (R' Pincus) grandfather, *zt”l*, used to say, “*Pareve is treif!*” He was referring to something else, but the expression is appropriate to our topic as well. Sitting on the couch, reading about meaningless things such as what happened in India – is *treif*. It introduces another element in the home besides Hashem, and as a result we won't have the “*kiss*” of Shabbos.

Shabbos is a matter of being alone. Hashem comes to our home in order to enjoy being with us. Sometimes this isn't easy – for instance, on a long, summer afternoon, when there's nothing to do. But if a person gives Hashem this “*kiss*” and puts aside his ordinary approach to life during these hours, he will immediately receive a kiss in return. He will feel the *kedushah* of Shabbos, the *mei’ein Olam HaBa* of Shabbos.

Someone once asked me: “What's so terrible about reading a newspaper on Shabbos? For me, it's *oneg Shabbos!*” I said to him: “Imagine you have guests for Shabbos, such as your parents or brothers. Everyone is sitting around the table, and you pull out a newspaper and read...”

One of the most moving moments of the year is on Yom Kippur when the *chazan* recites the *avodas Kohen Gadol* and recounts how in the Beis HaMikdash the *Kohanim* used to utter Hashem's ineffable Name and bless the people: “And the *Kohanim* and the people... when they heard the Name... would bend their knees, bow, avow, and cast themselves down....” At this point, everyone prostrates himself on the ground. It used to be customary in many shuls to hand out old newspapers to spread on the floor for the prostrations. Once I was davening in a certain shul and I noticed, while everyone was caught up in the prayer's great fervor, how someone was bending down and reading the newspaper lying on the floor!

If I had asked him, “What are you doing?” he surely would have answered, “What did I do wrong? The article had nothing forbidden in it!” True. But now, on Yom Kippur? Is this the time?

So it is on *Shabbos Kodesh*. This is not the right time to read newspapers! On Shabbos the whole world ceases to exist, and we are in the Beis HaMikdash, sitting in the company of Hashem, at His table: *זה השולחן אשר לפני ה*!

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Tizku Lemitzvot!

Adapted by R' Y. Levy from **Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim**

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QUESTION

If women get reward in Torah for urging their husbands and children to learn, what if the husband and children don't accomplish as much as her urging? Will she get more reward in proportion to what she encouraged or what they accomplished?

ANSWER

Here is a case as follows. A woman is urging her husband to learn so he goes to the *bais hamedrash* because she sent him. When he gets there, he falls asleep over the *Gemara*. But it's not her fault. Does she lose out? No.

Now, it could be she loses out because she chose the wrong husband. But suppose she did her best. Everybody told her he is a good man, a good learner, and then he turned out later he didn't succeed as much as he should have, so she gets reward according to her desires for him. She is rewarded according to her *bechirah* for him, her free will. The fact that he didn't measure up, that's something else.

I'll give you a *mashal*. Suppose you heard there's a sick man in the hospital. So you took a basket and you bought all kinds of delicacies for him and you went to the hospital and they said "We checked him out today. He got well already." You get reward anyhow. *חִישֵּׁב לְעַשׂוֹת מְצֻוָּה* – If you intended to do a *mitzvah*, *וְנִגְאַנְס וְלֹא עָשָׂה* – and then something happened and you couldn't do the *mitzvah*, you get reward (*Brachos 6a*). So the woman who intended her husband should be a learner, she gets reward.

She should push him as much as possible though. Of course not to make fights about it but she should push him.

And he is going to get it. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give it to him: "You got a woman who wanted to put so much into you and you made nothing out of yourself!" He'll be punished for it. No question about it. He'll be punished. He'll have to pay and pay.

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