

LESSONS IN APPRECIATION

by Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

1. Appreciating the Wisdom of a Wise Man

Before Yosef passed away he made his brothers take an oath that when they leave Egypt they should take his remains with them. The Torah states, "Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him..." In fact, Moshe was the only one who sought out the remains of Yosef in order to take them out of Egypt. Shlomo Ha'Melech (King Solomon) in Mishlei states, "A wise heart takes mitzvos." The Gemara in Sotah explains that this is referring to Moshe Rabbeinu. The reason Moshe searched for the remains of Yosef while the other Jews were preoccupied with borrowing the gold and silver vessels from the Egyptians was that he had "a wise heart." Although it was a Mitzvah to borrow the personal effects of the Egyptians as G-d commanded them, Moshe chose to seek out the remains of Yosef because he had a wise heart.

Moshe understood that without locating the remains of Yosef, the Jews would not be able to leave Egypt, regardless of all the miracles that had taken place. If this is the case, then it should have been an obvious priority for every Jew to seek out Yosef's remains. If so, then why did it take special wisdom to do so? Every Jew, even ones without that special wisdom, should have understood this.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos states, "Who is a wise man - The one who sees the outgrowth of his actions (or other events)." The question is why does the Mishna state that the wise man is the one who "sees" rather than the one who "understands" the outgrowth of his actions or other events? The answer is - understanding is something conceptual. It is something that is abstract and not tangible. However, if one "sees" the consequences and the outgrowths of one's actions, it is something that is real and concrete. Therefore, one deals with this reality differently because it seems tangible.

The Chacham (one who is wise) is a dimension of person who not only realizes what the future will bring based on the present but one who "knows" what the future will bring. Therefore, he deals with the future as the present. For example, if one sees fire and knows that it burns, he will not act irresponsibly by extending his hand into it; however, if he only conceptually believes that fire will burn, then it is possible based on one's conflicts, to justify extending his hand into the fire because its destructiveness is not a reality.

Shlomo Ha'Melech depicts Moshe as the "Chacham lev - the wise of heart" because he could not rely on anyone but himself to locate the remains of Yosef. The possibility of not locating it was a

reality for Moshe because it would mean that the Jews would not be redeemed. However, all the others who did not have this wisdom of the heart only related to that possibility on a conceptual basis. Therefore, their priority was to engage in what was tangible to them - the silver and gold vessels. Their view was that someone would attend to Yosef's remains. However, Moshe's perspective was that this could not be left to chance because of the grave possibility that the Jews would not be redeemed. He understood that they were at their lowest point - the 49th level of spiritual contamination. If the Jews remained in Egypt for a moment longer than they were intended to, they would have become spiritually extinct. Thus, there would not be a Jewish people or a Sinai. All existence hinged on the remains of Yosef being located and removed within the proper timeframe.

The Torah tells us that Avraham Our Patriarch trusted his faithful servant Eliezer with all of his material assets. Despite his enormous wealth, he trusted Eliezer implicitly. Eliezer was not only astute as the administrator of his master's estate but he was also spiritualized to the point of having a similar radiance as his master Avraham. When Avraham chose Eliezer as the person to locate a wife for his son Yitzchak (who would be the future Matriarch), he bound him by an oath to take a proper wife from Avraham's family and not from the daughters of Canaan. If Eliezer violated this oath, he would forfeit his share in the world to come.

The question is if Avraham had such a level of faith in his servant that he was entrusted with his fortune, then why when it came to choosing a proper wife for Yitzchak did he make him take an oath? The answer is - although it was unlikely that Eliezer would defy the order of his master, when it came to the spiritual future of the Jewish people, Avraham made him swear. He "saw" the consequence of what would happen should the proper wife for Yitzchak, a matriarch of the Jewish people, not be chosen. Therefore, it was not something he would leave to chance. This is because Avraham had wisdom of the heart.

When Hashem told Avraham that he would father a child at the age of 99 from Sarah, the Torah tells us that he rejoiced. Hashem valued this belief as righteousness for Avraham. However, when Sarah was informed that she was going to have a child she chuckled. She had a momentary flicker of doubt. The question is why was Avraham able to rejoice although he at that age was no longer able to father a child? The answer is because Avraham was a man who had wisdom of the heart; he "saw" Hashem's Word as a reality. Therefore, he rejoiced and Sarah did not.

2. The Attribute of Truth is a Key Element in Prayer

The Torah tells us that after the Jewish people left Egypt, the Egyptians pursued them to the Sea. The Torah states, "Pharaoh approached; the Children of Yisroel raised their eyes and behold! - Egypt was journeying after them, and they were frightened; the Children of Yisroel cried out to Hashem." It is clearly indicated from this verse that the Jewish people believed that it was within the power of Hashem to save them from the hands of the Egyptians. As it is stated, "and they cried out to

Hashem." However, the next statement expressed by the Jews seems contradictory. In the following verse the Torah states, "They said to Moshe, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?" On one hand the Jewish people prayed to Hashem (indicating their firm belief), and yet they spoke to Moshe as if they were heretics, blaming him for taking them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. How do we understand this?

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the verse - "they cried out to Hashem" to mean that Jewish people took hold of the "craft" of their forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Just as the Patriarchs prayed to Hashem at various times of need, so too did the Jewish people pray to Hashem at this perilous moment. If the Jewish people truly believed in tefillah (prayer) as their forefathers did, then why did they immediately complain to Moshe about their imminent destruction? The Ramban explains that the Jewish people prayed; however, when Hashem did not immediately respond to them they came to Moshe with their claim. Rashi uses the term they took hold of the "craft" of their forefathers to indicate that they did not pray with the level of conviction and belief in Hashem as their forefathers had done. They merely mimicked the behavior of the Patriarchs by praying in a time of need.

The Jewish people did not truly understand or appreciate tefillah nor did they have relevance to it at this moment. They had just emerged from being idol worshippers in Egypt. However, they were aware of the blessing that Yitzchak had given to his son Yaakov, "Ha'Kol kol Yaakov - the voice is the voice of Yaakov." This indicates that the power of tefillah (prayer) belongs to Yaakov and his decedents. Tefillah is the weapon of the Jew; however, there are certain criteria necessary to give it effectiveness.

What are these criteria? They include the characteristic of self-negation combined with the belief and understanding of tefillah which make it effective. The Jewish people prayed because they knew the Patriarchs had done so. However, they did not have the self-negation or the belief that was possessed by the Patriarchs. Therefore, Hashem did not respond to their prayers immediately and this caused them to complain to Moshe.

We say every day in the Ashrei (the Psalm that is said three times a day), "Hashem is close to all who call upon Him - to all who call upon Him truthfully (b'emes)." On a literal level, one would understand this to mean that when one calls out to Hashem sincerely, He will be close to him. If Hashem is close, then He will respond. On a deeper level, one can understand this verse to mean that Hashem is close to those who possess Emes (truth). If one lives a life of Emes (truth), which is consistent with what is dictated by the Torah then this causes Hashem to be close and to respond. The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us "the signet of Hashem is Emes." Therefore, if a person possesses this attribute then he has a commonality with Hashem, thus causing Hashem to be close to him. However, if one lacks integrity and is not true to what he understands and believes, then he does not possess the attribute of Emes and Hashem will not be close to him.

The ultimate truth -Emes- is Torah. As it is written in Mishlei, "Acquire truth and do not sell it." The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zarah explains that the acquisition of truth is referring to Torah, which is unadulterated. The Prophet states, "Teetain Emes L'Yaakov - Give truth to Yaakov." Yaakov, our Patriarch, is identified as the "man of truth" because he was the man of Torah. Therefore, one can understand why the weapon of Yaakov was his tefillah- "Ha'Kol kol Yaakov - the voice is the voice of Yaakov." If one possesses Emes, then his voice truly reflects the voice of Yaakov.

The Gemara tells us in a number of locations that Hashem created the yetzer ha'rah (the evil inclination) and Torah as its antidote. Meaning, one is able to counter and neutralize the evil inclination with Torah study. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that this is true only if one studies Torah "l'shmah- with the proper intent (which is study of Torah for its own sake)." If one studies Torah with the proper intent then it defuses the evil inclination and acts as an antidote. However, if a person studies Torah with an ulterior motive, then the person's involvement in the mitzvah is lacking integrity. He is studying it for his own sake and not for the Torah itself. Therefore, since he is lacking in Emes, his Torah study is not an effective antidote against the evil inclination just as prayer is not effective if one is lacking in Emes.

We say at the conclusion of the Amidah (silent prayer), " May it be Your will Hashem...that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days, Grant us a share in Your Torah, and may we serve You there with reverence, as in the days of old..." First, we beseech Hashem to rebuild the Bais HaMikdash and then we ask Him to give us a portion of His Torah, which is the means by which one identifies with Emes. Only when we possess truth are we able to serve Hashem with reverence, as in the days of old. We reinstate the commonality with Hashem through Torah, which is truth. At the sea, since the tefillah of the Jewish people was lacking in the quality of Emes, Hashem did not respond immediately to their outcries. Their commitment to tefillah was only as a "craft" of their forefathers.

3. When Does One Truly Fear G-d?

Hashem split the Sea and enabled the Jewish people to cross safely. Afterwards, Hashem closed it on Pharaoh and his army. The Torah states, "On that day, Hashem saved Yisroel from the hand of Egypt, and Yisroel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Yisroel saw the great Hand of Hashem that inflicted upon Egypt; and the people feared Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe, His servant."

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that when the Sea closed on the Egyptians, the Jewish people were concerned that perhaps they were not destroyed and that they came up on the other side and would continue to pursue them. In order to alleviate their fears and concerns, the Torah states, "Yisroel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore..." This indicated that Hashem had performed a miracle by causing the Sea to cast the remains of the Egyptians onto the seashore. The Torah tells us that only after the Jewish people saw the Egyptian remains on the seashore did they "fear Hashem" and had "faith in Him and Moshe his servant." It is difficult to understand why the Jewish

people only feared Hashem after they saw the destruction of the Egyptians. They had already witnessed revealed miracles such as the ten plagues. They experienced the splitting of the Sea, which was the greatest miracle of them all which even caused the pagan nations of the world to tremble in fear of Hashem. The Midrash tells us that the level of revelation experienced by the maidservant at the Sea was greater than that of Yechezkel the prophet. So why did they fear Hashem only after seeing that their oppressors no longer lived? How do we understand this?

The Torah is teaching us something profound - that as much as one recognizes the omnipotence of Hashem (even at a level that is greater than Yechezkel the prophet), if one fears anyone other than Hashem, then he does not truly fear Him. If one fully comprehends and internalizes the reality of who G-d is, then he has no reason to fear anyone. Nothing can happen to him that is not the Will of Hashem. It was only when the Jewish people no longer feared the Egyptians (because they were destroyed in the Sea) that they were able to fear Hashem. We also can understand from the verse, "they had faith in Hashem..." (only subsequent to the destruction of the Egyptians) that one does not have sufficient clarity to have "faith in Hashem" unless all distractions are removed. As long as the Jewish people were distracted by the existence of the Egyptians, they were blocked from fully internalizing who G-d was. Therefore, they could not have complete faith and reverence for Him.

The reason a person fears anything is because he believes and feels that his life or his predicament is dependent on that which he fears. However, if one has faith that Hashem totally dictates one's existence, then there is no reason to fear anyone other than Him. Thus, if one does fear someone other than Hashem, it is a deficiency in his faith.

In the Portion of Mishpatim, the Torah tells us that every Jew has an obligation to visit the Temple Mount (Bais HaMikdash) three times a year on the festivals and "see the Presence of the Master, Hashem." The Gemara in Tractate Chagigah discusses a case of a Canaanite slave who had two masters and was subsequently emancipated by one of them. As a result of this emancipation, half of him is considered a full Jew who has all the obligations of the Torah incumbent upon him. The other half of this individual (the part owned by the master) retains the Canaanite slave status (he is only bound by the mitzvos of a woman).

Since half of him is fully obligated in all the mitzvos, one would think that perhaps such an individual would be obligated to visit the Bais HaMikdash and "see the Presence of the Master, Hashem". However, the Gemara tells us that even though half of him is fully obligated in the mitzvos, he is absolved from visiting the Temple Mount. The reason for this is that this mitzvah entails going to "see the presence of the Master, Hashem," indicating that the individual who has one master is obliged to go, not the one who has two. If one has a master other than Hashem, he cannot fully appreciate and internalize Hashem, who is the Master. Therefore, the half-Jew/half-slave is exempt from visiting the Temple Mount.

The degree one reveres and fears Hashem is determined by the concerns and trepidations that one

has in his life.

4. To what Standard is One Held?

The Torah states after the Jewish people crossed the Sea to safety, "Moshe caused Yisroel to journey from the Sea of Reeds and they went out to the Wilderness of Shur; they went for a three-day period in the Wilderness, but they did not find water. They came to Marah, but they could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter...The people complained against Moshe saying, "What shall we drink?" ...There He (Hashem)tested them."

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that Hashem "tested" the Jewish people in Marah and He saw how "stiff-necked" they were because when they spoke with Moshe they did not address him in a respectful manner. Rather than complaining to Moshe, the Jewish people should have asked him to pray on their behalf to Hashem for water. The Jews failed the test, which demonstrated that they are a "stiff-necked" people. The question is - why only in Marah was it considered a test and their failing proved that they were a stiff-necked people? Why was it not considered a test when they were at the shore of the Sea and complained?

When the Jewish people were pursued by the Egyptians to the Sea, they said to Moshe, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?" Soon after the Sea split and the Jewish people crossed to safety. The Jewish people demonstrated the identical failing which was shown later in Marah vis-à-vis Moshe. Rather than saying to Moshe "why did you take us into the desert to die" the Jews should have said, "pray to G-d so that He should save us." This is something they did not do. Before Moshe passed away, he recounted all the failings of the Jewish people over the forty-year period from the time of the exodus from Egypt. One of the failings that he mentioned was how the Jews had lacked in faith before the splitting of the Sea and thus complained - "were there not sufficient graves in Egypt..." If this is the case then why was it not considered a failing of a test, which proved that the Jews were a stiff-necked people? How do we understand this?

The Jews initially complained to Moshe by saying, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?" This was before they had witnessed the splitting of the Sea. Although they had seen the plagues in Egypt, which were clearly identified as the Hand of G-d, nevertheless, they had not yet achieved the level of spirituality that they reached after the Sea was split. The Torah states, "They believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant," which did not precede the splitting of the Sea. There was no comparison between the level of revelation during the period of the plagues and the revelation of Hashem at the time of the splitting of the Sea. Thus, once the Jewish people reached this advanced level of belief, how could they address Moshe in the inappropriate way that they had done in Marah? As a result of the splitting of the Sea, they understood who Moshe was and instead, should have asked him to pray for them. However, this was not the case. They complained and thus failed the test. This was considered a failure because they already understood that Moshe was the servant of Hashem and therefore they should have behaved differently towards him.

Those who are less learned in Torah are less culpable than those who are learned. This implies that those who have an advanced level of understanding are more culpable. Thus, if one behaves in a manner that is not consistent with his level of understanding, then it is considered a serious failing. Although it was considered a failing and a lack of faith for the Jewish people to complain to Moshe before the splitting of the Sea, it was not considered a failure nor did it indicate that they were stiff-necked people. However, after the splitting of the Sea, (when they understood who Moshe truly was) the appropriate thing would have been for them to ask him to pray on their behalf. Since they did not, it is considered that they failed the test and demonstrated that they are a stiff-necked people.

The Torah states, "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people (Moshe will pass away).'" Rashi cites Chazal who say that despite the fact that Moshe understood that he was going to pass away after fulfilling the commandment to destroy the Midianites, "he nevertheless performed the Mitzvah with joy and he did not delay." If Moshe had decided not to act immediately upon the dictate of Hashem, he would have extended his life. The Midrash tells us that Moshe's immediate response to the dictate of Hashem without considering its consequences makes him "praiseworthy." Meaning, even a person as great as Moshe is considered praiseworthy for making this decision despite all of the reasons to delay.

The Midrash continues -Yehoshua Bin Nun, the disciple and successor of Moshe Rabbeinu led the Jewish people into the Land of Israel. Upon entry, Hashem commanded him to conquer the land and divide it among the tribes and then he will pass away. Understanding that his passing was going to be determined by when his mission was completed, Yehoshua chose to delay. His justification was that as long as he was alive the Jews would not succumb to idol worship. Nevertheless, Yehoshua had ten years taken from his life. The Midrash tells us that initially he was meant to live 120 years like his Rebbe, Moshe.

The difficulty is that if Chazal tell us that even for a person as great as Moshe Rabbeinu that his decision (not to delay) was considered praiseworthy, it indicates that if he had chosen to delay it would not have been considered a claim against him. So, why was Yehoshua held accountable for his decision to delay the conquest and division of the Land? How do we understand this?

The answer is that although the decision not to delay the battle with the Midianites was considered "praiseworthy" even for a person as great as Moshe Rabbeinu, despite all the considerations, Moshe's decision to ignore all the considerations establishes precedence. When G-d gives a dictate, one must attend to it immediately without any delay. Therefore, Yehoshua should have followed the precedent that was set by Moshe Rabbeinu. He should not have delayed regardless of how pure his intent may have been. This failing was the cause his early passing.

A person is only held to a standard that is consistent with his own level of understanding. Therefore,

if one understands how to behave and does not, it is considered that he has failed.

5. The Evolution of the Spirituality of the Jewish people

The Torah tells us that one of the four expressions of redemption that Hashem related to Moshe was, "V'lakachti lachem li l'am - I will take you for Myself to be My people and I will be your G-d (Elokim)." This expression of redemption is referring to the Sinai experience when the Jewish people became the Am Hashem (the Nation of G-d). At Sinai, we find that the Jewish people are referred to as "mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh - a kingly priestly holy people." The Jewish people did not immediately ascend to that level, but rather it was a progression.

Initially when Hashem sent Moshe to tell Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from bondage, He said to Moshe "Tell Pharaoh... Release My son, My firstborn (Beni Bechori)." Hashem identifies the Jewish people as his first-born child, which signifies that it is the most intimate relationship, as between a father and his son. The first-born son is the most special to his father. The relationship of a father and his son is not the same as that of a king and his subjects.

Subsequently, the Torah tells us that Hashem said to Moshe "Tell Pharaoh in My Name Shlach Ami - Send out My people." This verse identifies the Jewish People as "My People." Meaning, that at this moment the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people was: King to subject. The nature of this relationship is that the subject is selflessly dedicated to do the will of the master and the master is dedicated to provide for the subject. The relationship between G-d and the Jewish people has a duality; on one hand, the relationship is father (Avinu) to son, but at the same time, the son must recognize that the father is the master (malkeinu). Thus, the son must be dedicated to doing His will. Even before the Exodus, the Jewish people had established themselves as G-d's people and G-d's children. However, regarding Sinai, the Jewish people are referred to as "mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh - a kingly priestly holy people." As a result of the receiving the Torah at Sinai, which is accepting Hashem as their G-d, the Jewish people became sanctified. This established the status of Kedushas Yisroel - the sanctity of the Jewish People.

In Egypt, the Jewish people were devoid of mitzvos, as the verse in Yechezkel states, "and you are naked (devoid of spirituality)." As pagans in Egypt, the Jewish people had no relevance to spirituality and were no different from the Egyptians. Then Hashem gave them two mitzvos: the mitzvah of milah (circumcision) and the mitzvah of Korban Pesach (the Pascal Lamb Offering). Circumcision is the "sign that is engraved in our flesh." It is the manner in which the Jew identifies with G-d, as the Torah refers to circumcision, "ohs bris kodesh - the sign of the Holy Covenant." The bris milah is something that is part of a Jew's physicality and cannot be removed. Concerning the mitzvah of the Korban Pesach, the lamb/goat was an Egyptian deity. Thus, the significance of slaughtering it was the rejection of idolatry.

After the Jewish people were circumcised and they sacrificed the Korban Pesach, they reached a point where they developed the capacity for kedushah. (Sanctification). Thus, the Commandment

that follows is, "Kodesh Li Kol Bachor - Sanctify for Me all the first born sons." At this point Hashem sanctified the bachor (first born) of the Jewish people because the bachor shares a commonality with Him. Just as Hashem is the Rishon the First (and Only), who is the essence of all that is holy, so too is the first born - who shares that characteristic. The sanctity of the bachor is innate to who he is. However, the sanctification of the Jewish people as a whole (Kedushas Yisroel) was not able to take place until Sinai.

Kedushas Yisroel was only bestowed upon the Jewish people at Sinai. Although they were considered "G-d's people" (even before the Exodus - as it is stated "Shalch Ami"), at that moment they had no relevance to kedushah. This is explicit in the verse, "V'lakachti lachem li l'am - I will take you for Myself to be My people and I will be your G-d (Elokim)." It was only when the Jewish people ascended to the level of accepting Hashem as their G-d, "Elokim," could they be sanctified. This could not have taken place if there were any spiritual impediments.

Hashem identified the Jews as His people before Sinai. However, identification as "a holy and priestly nation" only occurred at Sinai. Why could He not bestow this new status upon the Jewish people before the Exodus? Rashi at the beginning in the Portion of Yisro explains that the greatest miracle of Egypt (even more than all the plagues) was that the Jewish people were able to leave Egypt. The difficulty is, after Egypt was devastated through the plagues, and the Jews were asked to leave - why was the Exodus itself the greatest miracle? The Egyptian people literally drove the Jews out of Egypt in order to stop the death that was brought upon them. Ramchal (in his work Derech Hashem) explains that the Jewish people, as a result of their bondage in Egypt, were so infected with spiritual contamination that they had virtually no capacity to internalize and have any sense of spirituality.

When Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt, He purged all of their impurities and gave them a capacity to relate to and be receptive to kedushah. In Egypt, it was impossible for the Jewish people as a whole to attain sanctity (Kedushas Yisroel).

6. The Value of Being Appreciative

The Torah states, "The Children of Israel were armed (chamushim) when they went up from Egypt." Rashi cites Chazal who explain the word "chamushim" to mean that only one fifth of the Jewish people left Egypt and four fifths perished during the days of darkness. In the Portion of Bo, Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the reason four fifths of the Jewish people perished during the plague of darkness was so that the Egyptians should not witness the demise of the evil ones among the Jewish people (those who did not want to leave Egypt). It was important that the Egyptians should be unaware of the destruction of four fifths of the Jews because they would say that the Jewish people were dying as they were. Hashem wanted the Egyptians to understand that it was only they who were being punished.

The Midrash Tanchuma offers another interpretation as to why the Jews who were evil died during the days of darkness. The Jews who survived the days of darkness praised and offered thanks to

Hashem for not allowing the Egyptians to be aware of the demise of the Jews who perished during darkness because the Egyptians would have rejoiced over their death. The question is - why is it important for Chazal to inform us that the Jews who survived the days of darkness gave thanks and praise to Hashem for not allowing the Egyptians to witness the demise of the evil Jews?

It is difficult to understand. If all the Jews in Egypt witnessed the revealed miracles, which clearly identified the Hand of Hashem- how is it possible that the vast majority of the Jewish people did not want to leave Egypt? As it is stated, "v'chamushim - only one fifth left Egypt." It is clear that there was a fundamental difference between these two groups of Jews. One group possessed a characteristic and quality that allowed them to fully appreciate and internalize the events that they had witnessed. However, the other group did not possess this quality.

The most fundamental quality an individual needs in order to be able to recognize and understand situations correctly is "ha'karas ha'tov- recognition of the good." If a person has the ability to recognize that he is the beneficiary of someone else's kindness then he is able to appreciate and understand his benefactor. However, if the person does not have the capacity to view himself as the beneficiary of someone else's kindness then he is always suspect of his benefactor's motive. Thus, he remains untrusting.

Despite the tragedy of the destruction of four fifths of the Jewish people, the one fifth that survived gave thanks and praise to Hashem for not allowing the Egyptians to rejoice in the demise of the evil Jews who did not want to leave Egypt. One would think that those who survived were overwhelmed with their grief and could not think of anything but attending to the burial needs of those who died. Nevertheless, the Midrash tells us that despite the tragedy that had befallen them, they saw Hashem's kindness and thus offered thanks and praise to Him. Because of this quality of ha'karas ha'tov, they were truly able to appreciate Hashem's concern for them. Therefore when they witnessed the miracles and the destruction of Egypt, they were fully trusting that this was only to bring about their redemption. If a person has the quality of ha'karas ha'tov, he will then have relevance to spirituality because he is able to process the events of his life in a way where he sees the goodness of Hashem.

The Gemara tells us that Dovid Ha'Melech (King David) promulgated that every Jew should recite at least 100 brachos (blessings) every day. Dovid Ha'Melech enacted this in response to ending a plague that had befallen the Jewish people. Initially he did not understand why they were deserving of this punishment. However, he finally realized that it was because the Jews were beneficiaries of Hashem's sustenance and kindness but did not acknowledge this fact. Thus, Dovid Ha'Melech and his Bais Din (Rabbinic Court) enacted that every Jew should say 100 brachos every day, which caused the plague to cease. The 100 brachos encompassed every aspect of our existence.

For example, the brachos we recite each morning articulate our acknowledgement that Hashem allows us to stand erectly, gives us the ability to see, and provides the amenities that are necessary

such as clothing the naked etc. It is irrelevant how much wealth a person may have; the fact that he is able to cloth his own nakedness is only because Hashem is his provider. It is not that we thank Hashem for the luxuries of life, but we must acknowledge Him for the bare necessities. People take these things for granted. Everything in life is a manifestation of the kindness of Hashem and we are the beneficiaries of His kindness. Therefore, we must be beholden and thank Hashem for everything we have. If one is able to recognize and appreciate this fact then one is humbled because he understands who he is not.

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Rabbi Kalatsky is the founder of the [Yad Avraham Institute](#), a New York-based learning center whose mission is to disseminate Torah to Jews of all backgrounds and walks of life.