

THE FLAVOR OF FAVOR

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM spoke to Moses saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: This is how you shall bless the Children of Israel, saying to them: "May the HASHEM bless you and watch over you. May HASHEM cause His countenance to shine to you **and favor you**. May the Lord raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace." (Bamidbar 6:22-26)

and favor you: May He grant you favor- Rashi

Amongst the many blessings showered by the Holy Kohanim upon the People of Israel and favor you: May He grant you favoris the granting of something called –"Chen"- favor! How does one merit this Divine favor? "And Noach found favor in the eyes of HASHEM" – the Torah tells us. What did he do to attract or be deserving of such favor. Obviously it's a gift, a Heavenly gift at that, and it's not something that just anyone command or control. Yet there are factors that might make one an antenna for such a beautiful blessing.

The Chovos HaLevavos in Shaar Bechina describes an odd phenomenon that is universally experienced. He speaks of the wonder that the Almighty made it so that an infant is perceived as cute and adorable by adults. In particular, the mother finds the child so attractive and charming that she is willing to give away her sleep and her food and her health to be constantly attentive to the child. To the extent that the child is helpless, to that degree people, especially young girls find that toothless, hairless, inarticulate creature beautiful.

As the child becomes more able to care for its own needs the less it is reliant on help from others, to that extent it is much less attractive and the amount of favor it finds decreases. After a while, if a person is not cleaning and clothing and earning his keep, people will become disgusted and they will find just the opposite of favor. Why is that so? People have a Divine instinct to help the helpless. It appeals to the deep natural good within us. However, that is only if a person is doing all in his power to help himself.

The helplessness must necessarily be accompanied by an innocence and pure vulnerability. Perhaps for that reason an orphan is often the beneficiary of the attitude of favor.

The following story is recorded in the biography of a giant of a man Rabbi Eliezer Geldzahler, who died tragically as a young man. His daughter writes the following: *Some time after Reb Leizer's petirah, his daughter was driving on the Garden State Parkway. She stopped for gas and noticed that the attendant was a midget. As he began to wash her windows, he caught sight of a large picture on the*

passenger seat. He became visibly excited as he pointed to it. "How do you know that man?" he asked in a state of agitation. "I've been looking for him for more than two years. Where is he?"

The girl gently informed him that the man in the portrait was her father and that he had passed away from injuries sustained during a bus accident. The fellow stared at her, disbelieving, and then began to cry silently. "You know," he said, "I do this job day after day, morning after freezing morning. There aren't many jobs available to someone like me. Cars pull in here every few moments, but everyone averts their eyes, feeling uncomfortable with my strange appearance.

"Then, one day, your father pulled in. He looked me straight in the eye, like no one else had ever done. 'My friend,' he said to me, 'you are an inspiration. You were born with what might appear as a great handicap, but you refuse to play the role of the victim. You get up in the morning, go to work, and earn an honest living.

You are a role model for all of us. You teach us that circumstances should not dictate the terms of our existence.' "I am on my way to New York, where I am the head of a large school. Today, I am going to tell my students all about you so that they might learn from your example.'" With his eyes glistening, the gas station attendant completed his tale. "Of course, I so looked forward to seeing your father. He made me feel tall."

This may just be the biggest hint and the most effective way to find that ever elusive gift. Shower others with the authentic experience that you so desperately seek. By emulating HASHEM, as the Kohanim do, by blessing others, you too may attract **the flavor of favor**.