



Honorable Mentchen: Cultivating Humility

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

A great leader once said, "The best way to remain humble is to find one aspect in every person where he is better than you." In the same vein, the Koshnitzer Rebbe related that there was a *tzadik* who wouldn't sit down to eat until he could find one great quality in every person sitting at his table. We have to train ourselves to look for the good within others. Once we've associated a person with a superior trait, we will automatically identify him with that aspect. Human nature is to do the opposite. We tend to latch on to people's flaws. Sometimes we try to be fair. We'll say some good things and then go on to the bad. But if we just focus on the positive, it will change both ourselves and how we view others.

Another way to cultivate humility is to be careful to cite sources when telling a story or a Torah interpretation. It's not only the fair thing to do, it's also a reminder that our wisdom is built on other people. People often

think that honorable people are those who receive lots of respect. The Mishna in Avot says the opposite, "Who is respectable? One who honors others."

We tend to judge people by what they do, and judge ourselves based on our intentions. If a person uses his full potential, yet his accomplishments are limited, that's impressive and deserving of honor. The Chazon Ish would stand up in honor of mentally challenged people. He explained that these individuals had already fulfilled their potential in a previous life.

The golden rule when dealing with people subordinate to you is to think: How would I like someone smarter than me to treat me? You may be intelligent in one area, but you're surely faulty in other areas. You could be a top university professor, but if you don't know anything about electricity, where would you be without an electrician when you need him?

The Torah tells us in Devarim, "Hashem is the Lord of hosts. He does justice on behalf of orphans and widows." The Creator governs everything, but he is also the Father of the humble and the downtrodden. We must emulate His ways. If you have prominence and clout, use it to help people. Write letters of recommendation, go out of your way to provide assistance, and use your resources to benefit others.

There was once a fire in the town of Brisk. All the poor homes were burned, while the rich ones were spared. Although Rav Chaim Brisker's home was saved, he moved into the shul to live with the homeless Jews. He did this to show compassion for those whose homes were devastated. He had another intent, to force his affluent members to help their poor neighbors rebuild. This is an example of using prominence for a noble cause.

Preparation for Amida, Part 3: Redeemer Throughout History

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The third blessing of *kriat shema* which precedes the *shemonei esrei* is the blessing of *Ga'al Yisrael*. It tells how Hashem redeemed Israel from Egypt, a defining event in the history of the Jewish people. The redemption from Egypt teaches us that Hashem's word is true and absolute, and He can be relied on completely. Hashem gave Avraham a prophecy that the Jews would be enslaved for 400 years. On Pesach night, exactly 400 years later, the Jewish people were redeemed as He promised.

We begin the blessing with the words, "*Emet v'yatzev v'nochon v'kayam*." We reiterate 15 expressions of truth that assert that the Exodus makes our knowledge and reliance on Hashem true, steadfast, correct, and eternal. A Jew can always trust Hashem to redeem and save him from difficulty. Jewish history began in the crucible of Egypt. It is the testimony of a nation of faith. We believe that the way Hashem redeemed us in the past will be how He will continue to protect and redeem us in the future.

The blessing concludes with the words, "The Rock of Israel, the way You redeemed our forefathers, come now and redeem Israel, our redeemer Hashem." We learn from *yetziat Mitzrayim* that Hashem protects His people and will redeem us from all of our troubles. Therefore, we say this blessing as a final introduction to the praises of *shemoneh esrei*. For redemption is the greatest of all human needs in this world of tests, difficulties, and downfalls. We need heavenly help to redeem us from our failures and to help us grow as we traverse the circuitous path of life.



Parshat Noach: Dove's Directive

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Noach tells the story of the the *mabul* (Great Flood) that destroyed the world leaving only Noach, his family, and the animals he saved. When Noach wanted to know if it was safe to leave the ark, he sent a dove out. The first time the dove came back. Noach waited seven days and again sent him out. This time the dove returned with an olive branch. Noach now knew that the waters had subsided. He waited another seven days and sent the dove out again. This time it didn't return.

The Darash David points out that Chazal call the dove *yonah d'beisa*. He was like Noach's pet and he was close to him. First the verse says, "*Vayishlach et hayonah m'ito*. He sent the dove from him." Then it says, "*Vayishlach et hayonah min hateva*. Noach sent the dove from the ark." Then it says, "*Vayishlach et hayonah*. He sent the dove away." We see a gradation of separation from the personal connection, to dispatching him from his environment, to sending him away completely.

The dove is compared to *klal Yisrael*. When we send our children into life we have to send them off gradually. First we experience closeness. Even when they leave, they are always welcome to come back. Then there's a feeling that we're sending them from home. Then we're able to send them off into the world. It's a step by step farewell where we hold on to them and allow them to come back until they're comfortable to move on, on their own.

The Alter of Slabodka notes that many times people will do a *mitzvah* and neglect aspects of *bein adam l'chavero*. If you wake up early to pray *vatikin*, but disturb your sleeping roommates in the process, you've lost a great part of the *mitzvah*. We may get so involved in a charity project that we can end up stepping on other people's feelings. The Matnat Kahuna explains that when the dove tore the olive branch off the tree Noach said, "Had you just taken a leaf, the branch could have continued to grow." Although the dove did a great *mitzvah* by informing Noach that the waters had subsided, he did it at the expense of the tree which could no longer reach its full potential. We learn from this how careful we

must be when doing a good deed to pay attention to the small details along the way.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin says the dove prayed to Hashem, "I prefer that my sustenance be bitter like an olive and come directly from You, rather than sweet as honey but delivered by humans." The Rabbeinu Bachya points out that if this is true for a bird, how much more so for a human who has intellect and a sense of shame. Rav Hirsh further explains that the dove meant to say, "Better is bitter food gained in freedom and independence than sweet food received in dependence."

The Divrei Yisrael asks, if it's from Hashem's hand how can the food taste bitter? In addition, the food in the ark was also from Hashem. What did the dove mean? The Siach Yaakov explains that the dove was anxious to leave because it was missing a feeling of being dependent solely on Hashem. It wanted to raise its eyes and turn solely to the Almighty rather than receiving its food from a person. The Jewish people are compared to the dove. Our challenge is to recognize we're beholden to Hashem. Our sustenance which is constantly being renewed by the Creator, should not be taken for granted. Hashem wants our constant connection and dependency.

The Alter of Kelm says *parnasah* (sustenance) is a test. Externally it seems the person is in charge. He can easily think it's his efforts that earn him money. But our task is to rouse ourselves to see that everything is in the hands of Hashem. His will alone is the true source of our sustenance. When Adam sinned, he lowered himself to this world in which nature appears real. Man's challenge is to see through the illusions. It's only Hashem's providence that gives us the ability to exist.

The Gemara says three keys rest directly in the hands of Hashem, rain, sustenance, and the revival of the dead. The dove reminded Noach that *parnasah* is in the hands of the Almighty. Better the anxious prayer to Hashem for sustenance than the sweetness of feeling you're in control. This feeling of total depen-

dency on Hashem is a test of our *emunah*.

Rav Wolbe explains the verse in *Birchat Hamzon*, "*Lo ledei matnas basar adam*." (Let me not come to receiving gifts from people.) Let my sustenance come from an aspect where I'm involved in acquiring the money, rather than just receiving it as a gift from others.

How then do we understand the Kolel lifestyle? The Satmar Rav explains, we ask Hashem, even if we have to accept from others, let it come wholeheartedly from the divine part of the person and not as an insincere gift with ulterior motives. Rav Chaim Kanievski suggests that those who dedicate their life to Torah are not accepting gifts, but as the Gemara says, the townspeople are required to support them. Although it seems they are taking, they are really giving merits to the world. Both people are supporting each other.

The Netivot Sholom says that the dove returned at night, a time of judgment. The dove meant to say, "I'd rather struggle in my *avodat Hashem* and do the *mitzvot* that are difficult, rather than good deeds that are enjoyable and come easy to me. Torah is about moving beyond the feeling of complacency. It's stretching beyond one's comfort zone. When a Jew sacrifices to serve Hashem, it is beloved to the Almighty. The more we develop ourselves, the more we get to know ourselves. Sometimes we have to push hard and it takes a lot out of us, but then there's the good feeling of accomplishment at the end.

The Sichot Avodat Hashem says that on Rosh Hashana a person is judged according to his deeds. On Chanukah we're judged out of pure mercy. We pray to Hashem, "I'd rather be judged at the time of the *zayit* (olive oil) when the Chanukah lights are kindled and mercy reigns, than on Rosh Hashana when we dip the apple in honey and are judged according to our deeds. In fact, Chassidut teaches that the 8th day of Chanukah is the final day of judgment.

May this year be filled with blessing and success.