

# PARSHAS BECHALOSECHA



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## THE KEY TO ALL SUCCESS

### COMPLAINTS SET OFF MOSHE RABEINU

In this week's *parshah*, Klal Yisrael complained, and in addition to Hashem becoming very angry, Moshe got very upset and said some seemingly very strange claims to Hashem (Bamidbar 11:10-15). He said, למה הרעת לעבדך, "Why did You cause me to be in such a pickle? Why did You put me together with such folks? Why did You send me against my will to take them out of Mitzrayim? *Velamah*, why didn't I find favor in Your eyes when I said to You to 'Please send somebody else'? Why did You put the burden of this nation upon me? I'm only one individual, one single person, can I bear and raise this entire nation? האנכי הרייתי את כל העם הזה, Did I give birth to them? Am I the mother of this nation, that would justify that I have to take care of them? They are not my children. They're Your children, Hashem. And מאין לי בשר, they come to me to complain that they want *basar*. Where do I have *basar* from? כי יבכו עלי, when they cry to me and they say לנו בשר. I can't take it, Hashem."

It's amazing. Moshe Rabeinu says to Hashem לא אוכל אנכי לבדי לשאת את כל העם הזה, "I can't take it. I can't bear this nation all by myself. It's too big of a job. הרגני נא הרג, Kill me Hashem." That's a pretty strong language. "If I find favor in Your eyes, I don't want to see my evil anymore."

They complained about a little meat, and Moshe Rabeinu went totally berserk. He went totally over the top. They complained about the *mann*. They got the *mann* and they complained, "What kind of food is this?" Why was Moshe Rabeinu surprised that they complained? It says when Hashem gave the *mann*, Hashem told him that the *mann* would serve as a *nisayon*. It says, ויענך למען, "I will afflict and I will starve you and I will give you the *mann*." Hashem said: I gave you the *mann* for that purpose, ענותך ולמען נסותך, in order to test you and in order for you to be afflicted, challenged. That's what I gave it to you for. So Moshe Rabeinu knew that the *mann* was going to serve as a challenge for Klal Yisrael, and now Moshe Rabeinu faces this challenge. He tells Hashem, "That's it." Do you know how many challenges Klal Yisrael gave Hashem and Moshe Rabeinu? The whole story with the *eigel hazahav*. They made Moshe upset about a lot of things. And suddenly, here, Moshe Rabeinu responds seemingly in a very extreme manner. I'd like to understand why specifically this episode set Moshe Rabeinu off more than any other situation.

My Zeida (R' Avigdor Miller) explained from his *rebbe'im* as follows. He said what type of *aveiros* set Moshe Rabeinu off? What type of sins was Moshe Rabeinu most concerned about? The ideal goal of the Jewish nation is to be *avdei Hashem* and to have the *hashra'as haShechinah* with Klal Yisrael. The *emes* is, the only thing that really ticked Moshe Rabeinu off was the type of *aveiros* that would undermine our whole relationship with Hashem. You know there are many things a person does that are *aveiros*. To be human is to err, to sin. אין אדם בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא. But there are certain *aveiros* that undermine one's entire relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and those are the worst sins imaginable. Moshe Rabeinu saw this episode, this *aveirah* of Klal Yisrael, as something that was going to undermine and destroy the whole foundation, the whole *even hapinah*, cornerstone of Klal Yisrael. Why is that? What was this specific *aveirah*? What did they do wrong?

### ALL AVODAS HASHEM IS BASED ON GRATITUDE

The people expressed a lack of satisfaction. They expressed sadness over something beneficial that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave them. Now, the *Chovos Halevavos* tells us that the entire *avodas Hashem* of an individual is based upon the *yesod* of *hakaras hatov*. This is the way to be *mekarev* somebody. Let's say you're talking to somebody who's not yet *frum* and you want to know what the first thing you should discuss with him is. Yiddishkeit? No, that's a bad idea because he's going to think you're trying to proselytize or brainwash him. Even if you are trying to educate him and open up his mind, the question is: How do you do that? Tell him about mitzvos? The best way to do it is to ask him, "When you were young, did your parents bring you up with the concept of 'please' and 'thank you'? Were you exposed to such a *chinuch*?" What will most people tell you? "Yes." Most people, even if they aren't *frum*, bring up their children with the concept that you have to say, "please" and "thank you." So I said to the people, "Do you believe that's a valid morality that a person should bring into his life?" Almost without fail, everybody agreed that it was a good point. And I said, "That's the basis of Yiddishkeit. Yiddishkeit is about the fact that we think about the benefits and kindnesses that Hashem does with us. Once we consider that and do that, we owe and feel that we have to say, 'thank you.'" You have to give a response. That gets them thinking. I tell them, "Are you aware of the fact that a Jew makes a *brachah* on anything he puts in his mouth?" Why does he make that *brachah*? The answer is, because he's acknowledging it's from Hashem and he appreciates it. A person thanks Hashem for the great gift of something even as simple as water.

Now, when a person tells me he's not satisfied with what Hashem has given him, that person is facing a threat to his entire Yiddishkeit. People used to ask me, "How do you explain this mitzvah, or that *mitzvah*?" And I would tell them, "That's not it. Think about the general premise, the premise of *Yahadus*. Once you know the premise, you do the mitzvos out of gratitude." This is so tremendous. You know why? Have you ever met a secular Jew? You probably were tongue-tied and did not know what to say to him. Did you ever think about what to say to him? No. Every person who called me during the Coronavirus pandemic asked me, "How are you doing?" I said, "I'm doing wonderful. I am so grateful to Hashem that I've been spared. I feel bad for everybody who got the virus. I am ecstatic that my breathing apparatus works and I can walk around and enjoy myself." That is what Yiddishkeit is predicated upon.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: this shiur was given on June 11, 2020, three months after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

The *madreigah* of *hakaras hatov* that a person has will determine his level of service to Hashem. The most important thing is to reach the pinnacle.

## GRATITUDE GOES TOGETHER WITH SIMCHAH

Now this concept of *hakaras hatov* goes hand in hand with *simchas hachaim*. If you see a Jew who doesn't look happy, that's a tragedy of tragedies because at this very moment he has so much to be happy about. Just this morning, I heard about a *talmid chacham* who went into exploratory surgery today on his brain. Hashem should send him a *refuah sheleimah, besoch sha'ar cholei Yisrael*. A young man, a relatively young man. They had to open his brain. You know what kind of turmoil that is? It's mind-boggling. And when I heard about it, I said, "Thank You, Hashem." I don't remember ever thanking Hashem for not having brain surgery before hearing about this *talmid chacham*.

And that has to obligate you. Not just to be thankful that it didn't happen to you, but to realize that what you have is tremendous! Think about it, you should be walking around ecstatic. When a person appreciates the *tovos* that Hashem grants him and is happy with them, then he is satisfied. People like this are happy people. If a person thinks about the gift of health, the gift of food, the gift of a *matzav* of peace. Did you ever listen to the news? You hear about the riots, and everybody gets bought off and they say, "Oy vey, riots!" So some genius gets on a tape and says, "Everybody should move to Israel! That's what Hashem wants of us." Are you out of your mind? You can't even go to Israel now, even if you wanted to. They wouldn't let you go. What you have to do right now is to thank Hashem that you are at home and that you have a home to be in. You have to thank Hashem that you are at peace with yourself, that no one came into your block or bothered you in your neighborhood. You have to thank Hashem that you've been spared. It doesn't matter what you hear; your job is to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The *gemara* says that the Shechinah rests upon someone only *mitoch simchah*. When I see somebody who's not happy, I know that this complainer has forgotten about Hashem, he's forgotten about Hashem's kindness, and this fellow has no connection to the Shechinah. That's exactly what scared Moshe Rabbeinu to pieces. When he saw that instead of Klal Yisrael thanking Hashem for the amazing miracles that Hashem had done for them, and for the amazing miracles He was doing for them on a daily basis in the desert, what did they do? They began to complain. He says, "Wow!" That got him nervous. He said, "Hashem, I can't handle it." If that's the case, they're going to be complainers. There's no future for this nation. This is going to cause the Shechinah to leave this nation.

My Zeida said over an amazing *chiddush* in the name of the Alter of Slabodka. What do we all know is one of the greatest principles of Judaism? What's one of the most fundamental principles of Judaism? *Emunah*. 100% correct. *Emunah* in Hashem. *Emunah*, believing that everything is a representation of Hashem. He said there's a bigger principle than *emunah*, and that was the shocker. He said the bigger principle than *emunah* is to feel the *chessed* of Hashem and to be *makir* and recognize that Hashem is the source of every single thing that we have, of all the good that we have. Do you know one of the *ra'ayos* he brought? The Torah makes no mention of the episode of Avraham walking into the furnace. Now, what did it take for Avraham to walk into the furnace? What did Avraham have to have? *Hakaras hatov*? What did he need to have to build upon? He had to have *emunah*. He had to recognize the existence of Hashem. That's why he subjected himself to that challenge. But the Torah, on the other hand, talks at length about the acts of *chessed* of Avraham. Why is that? That's because recognizing the *chessed* of Hashem is what brought about Avraham's acts of *chessed*. Avraham's acts of *chessed* were him emulating the *chessed* of Hashem. When a person emulates the *chessed* of Hashem and he is *mechazek* that *yesod*, that's a bigger principle than *emunah* in Hashem.

Moshe Rabbeinu saw this as a threat to Klal Yisrael. He was very scared. He said to Hashem, "If we can't fix up this situation, if this situation is not going to be corrected, kill me. Take me out. I have no function. My whole purpose is to raise a nation that will be dedicated to acknowledging the *chessed* of Hashem." They don't recognize that?!

That's why, Rabbosai, we say it a million times. Does anybody know offhand where we say this in *davening*, where it's black on white that this is a major obligation? You say it in *davening*. You should know this because you *daven* sometimes. שכן חובה כל היצורים, this is the obligation of all *yetzurim, lehodos*, to give praise before Hashem, and to be *mosif* ותשבחה. Do you know what that means? What does that mean: more than all *shiros* and *tishbachos*? The *rishonim* explain that the obligation you have is to thank Hashem and sing His praises more than Dovid Hamelech. You hear that?! Hashem wants you to say all the praises of Dovid Hamelech plus. Unbelievable!

## HASHEM WAITS FOR THE PRAISES OF KLAL YISRAEL

Now, don't think that's a small thing. You have to know that *Chazal* tell us that Hashem is *yoshev umetzapeh*, He sits and He waits for the *shiros* and *tishbachos* of Klal Yisrael. If you knew that Hashem is waiting to hear you express the kindnesses that Hashem did for you, you think you'd become a little more talkative in that direction. You talk, but in the wrong direction. You'd be singing the praises. You'd be screaming at the top of your lungs the praise of Hashem. There is a *passuk* that says הללויה אודה ה' בכל לבבי, Dovid Hamelech would get up, *Chazal* tell us, every single night at *chatzos*, and he would be *meshabeach* Hashem and *modeh* with *shiros* and *tishbachos*. That's unbelievable. He knew that Hakadosh Baruch Hu enjoys and wants this recognition of Him, and that's why he would get up and would sing these praises of Hashem.

Now, the Zohar says that if a person knows how to praise Hashem, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *mekabel* that praise as a *tefilah*. And he says an amazing thing. Hashem will save you from *tzaros*. The Zohar says that's the *pshat* ויאננו, if a person knows My name, he knows that what I want is for him to praise Me and he calls out to Me, Hashem says, I will save you (Tehillim 91:15).

## PRAISE BRINGS YESHUOS

Now this is a tremendous insight, a very important *yesod* in *avodas Hashem*: A person should build a relationship with Hashem based on nothing other than *hakaras hatov*. For every single pain that you have that causes you discomfort - it doesn't

have to be major pain, but you have discomfort, and no one likes any type of discomfort - you have to know what Hashem is telling you: You never thank Me. You never appreciated enough what I did for you. So I give you a little pain, and now I want to see how you respond.

It says in the *passuk* (Devarim 8:18) "you should remember Hashem," "because He is the One Who gives you the strength to succeed." How many people get a little older and they can't function like they did when they were younger? Their hands become arthritic. Their back starts to hurt them. They start to suffer from sciatica, weak knees, painful hips, feeble minds and so on. They can't walk. You see them shuffling. It's heartbreaking. I remember thinking as a young man, looking at people a little older than me, that they looked healthy. Will they ever become feeble? And I watched people change, and they became feeble. I asked my grandfather about this, and he said, "Thank Hashem. Sing His praises whenever you see that, and then you won't have to experience it." But if you start to experience this, you have to know the first thing the *yetzer hara* tries to challenge a person is to get him to forget this fact that every single thing that he gets is due to the *chessed* of Hashem. Did you ever swallow something and it went down the wrong way? You had that experience? You swallowed something and it went down the wrong pipe? You started to cough. Did you have it? People who had it know it's not comfortable. Every single time you swallow, the reason why it goes down the right way is only because of the *chessed* of Hashem. That's what you have to know.

There is a *passuk* in *Tehillim* (40:12) that says like this, "You Hashem, don't stop Your kindness from being showered on me. Your *chessed* and Your truth, will constantly protect me. So if you look in the Ibn Ezra on that *passuk*, he says like this. What's going to keep me protected from all *tzaros*? By the fact that I related to others, I related to the multitudes all about your kindness and Your truth that You showered upon me."<sup>2</sup>

Anyone who was willing to listen to my grandfather would constantly hear him praising Hashem for every single thing in his life. Many people were bored by that, but my Zeida knew the secret. He enjoyed health insurance. He didn't like going to doctors. He took Hakadosh Baruch Hu's advice and he said, "I'm going to thank You, Hashem. I'm going to sing Your praises *bekehal rav*."

You have to know this is a tremendous *yesod*. That's why whenever you have a *tzarah*, examine whether you appreciate all that Hashem gives you and have been thanking Hashem for. Let's say a person is going along his hunky dory life and he has a wonderful wife. His wife respects him. His wife shows him kindness. And then one day she decides she's going to show him some lip, and she tells him, "Let me tell you, honey, enough is enough. Now I'm going to speak up." I believe that it happens in almost everybody's marriage at some point or another. Your wife talks back. You want to know why that happened? The answer is simple. You know why? Because you *daven* to Hashem every day *sim shalom*. You heard *birchas kohanim* and they said *שלום לך*, and you had *shalom* but you weren't the happiest person. You should have been the happiest person in the world, but you weren't. You were always grouchy. You always found things to complain about. You were from the *mesonenim*. Not *kemesonenim*, you were *mamash mesonenim*. It was too this. It was too that. You never sang the praises of Hashem from the top of the roof. Your wife is too much this, too little that. And then all of a sudden, all of a sudden, your life becomes challenged. I tell all people who get married. If your marriage starts out very nice, I'm very happy for you. But let me tell you, it's not going to be like that. And most marriages experience some rockiness in the beginning because people don't appreciate the *chessed* of Hashem.

Now, there is a Rabeinu Yonah in *Sha'arei Teshuvah* in *Sha'ar Harevi'i*, and he says like this: Let's say a person gets sick and he thinks, you know, I'm not a big *tzaddik*. I definitely did *aveiros* in my life, and I definitely deserve *yesurim*. And now he experiences *yesurim*. So now what should he do? He says, if this person justifies the *yesurim* upon himself and is *mekabel* the *mussar be'ahavah*, it's going to be a protection for him from all the many *yesurim* that are befitting to come upon him. You hear that amazing thing? That's an amazing *chiddush*.<sup>3</sup>

### HOW TO MINIMIZE THE JUDGEMENT

Here is a person who just got some bad news, or maybe he didn't get the bad news yet, but some kind of lump developed. He doesn't know what it is. What should he do? You know what he should do? He should tell Hashem, "You're justified." Not to say, "Oh no, I can't deal with this." You know how many calls I get like this? People call me and they say, "Oh, Rabbi Brog, this is one thing I can't deal with. This better not be what I think it is." Who in the world do you think you are? You're a *meshugene*! Telling Hashem what to do!? Rabeinu Yonah says the more a person praises Hashem and accepts the judgment of Hashem, the judgment will be minimized. He says when it comes to *hoda'ah*, the more a person thanks Hashem for all the *tovah* that He brings

to him, the more he can look forward and hope that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will continue to shower him with amazing *toivos*. This is unbelievable.

I want to share with you a story now that two *gedolim* testified they heard from the *ba'al hama'aseh*. The *ba'al hama'aseh* was a very big *tzaddik* and a *gaon*. His name was Rav Nochum Yasser. He related his story, and his mouth was full of gratitude to Hashem. He had one daughter who wasn't married yet. She was an adult, already a teenager, and it came time for her to get married, but suddenly she became sick, and the sickness became worse and worse. She eventually was put into the hospital until one Friday morning her *matzav* got so bad that the doctors said it's over, and they said there are only a few hours left for her to live. This pierced Rav Nochum's heart like an arrow. But all his life he served Hashem, so what did he do? He didn't lose himself. He heard the terrible news. He said, "Listen, we're talking about a few hours until the afternoon of Friday, so let me go to the *mikveh*

<sup>2</sup> אתה, חסדך ואמתך - שפסרתי לקהל רב, הם יצרוני מכל צר ואם תמצא את החוטא תלצה, ותקרה עליו צרה, ויצדיק עליו את הדין ויקבל המוסר באהבה, יהיה זה לו למגן מן היסורין הרבים הראויין לבוא עליו. כמו שנאמר (תהלים ט"ו) כי חמת אדם תודך שארית חמת תחגר. פרוש - כאשר צער האדם יודה אותך כלומר שיודה אותך האדם בעת צערך. מלשון (איוב ו'ב) לו שקול וישקל כעשי שענינו הצער. שארית חמת. שהיו מפתחות לבוא על האדם. קענון (מלכים א כ"א) אל יתהלל חגר כמפתח. תחגר ותעכב אותם ואל תביאם עליו. וזה הדרך משל למפתח החרב ומשיב אותה אל נדנה. ונאמר (ישעיה י"ב:א) אורך ה' כי אנפת בי ישב אפך ותנחמני. פרוש - אורך על מוסרך וקבלתיו באהבה, ובעבור זה שאורך על שאנפתי בי, ישב אפך ותנחמני. וכן בענין ההודאה על הטובה נאמר (תהילים נ"ב:א) אורך לעולם כי עשית ואקנה שמך כי טוב נגד חסידך. פרוש - אורך על הטובה שעשית עמדי. ובעבור זה אקנה להתמדת טובתך. ונאמר (תהילים קט"ז:ג) כוס ישועות אשא ובשם ה' אקרא (תהילים קט"ז:ג-ד) צרה ויגון אמצא ובשם ה' אקרא. ואמרו רבותינו זכרוננו לברכה בענין מה שכתוב (תהילים ג'א) מזמור לדוד בברחו, (משלי כ"א:ט"ו) שמחה לצדיק עשות משפט. מדתן של צדיקים פורעים חובן ומזמרין להקב"ה. משל לבעל הבית שהיה לו ארסי וניה אותו ארסי ח"ב לו. עשה אותו ארסי את הגרן וצברה ועשאה קרי. נטל בעל הבית את הקרי וניקנס הארסי ריקן לביתו וניה שמח שהיה נקנס ריקן. אמרו לו יצאת מנגרך וידך על ראשך ואתה שמח, אמר להם אף על פי כן השטר ממך. פרעתי את חובי.

right now because for the next seven days I won't be able to go to the *mikveh*. So let me go to the *mikveh* now to be *tahor* at least *lekovod* Shabbos." He hurried to the *mikveh*, and from there he prepared himself for what was coming. Even though he was a *gadol baTorah*, he was a *posek*, but he was afraid that maybe he should know the *halachos* more clearly about what to do in this *matzav*. So he sat down quickly, and he learned *bekitzur* the *halachos* of *kriyah* and the *halachos* of *aninus*.

After he finished learning the *halachos*, he decided to go to the hospital. On the way to the hospital, he remembered he forgot to bring a knife to do *kriyah*. He went back to his house, he got the knife, and calmly he walked to the hospital, expecting the last moments of his daughter's life.

He started to think to himself, "What does Hashem want me to do now?" Now, he knew he had no *ta'anos* on Hashem. He said, "Hashem, help me fulfill *מכל מאדך מה אלקיך את ה' ואהבת את ה' אלקיך מכל מאדך*. The *gemara* says that means whatever You dish out to me, Hashem, I will accept it and I will serve You. Help me do that properly the way You want me to do it." After he started to think about the many kindnesses that Hashem did for him during his daughter's lifetime, he became motivated and aroused to feel the love of Hashem, and he became *besimchah*. He said, "I hope I can get as happy now as if I'd be going to the *chuppah* of my daughter." He entered into a state of *simchah* as his feet were taking him to say goodbye to his daughter. At that time, he was *mekabel* upon himself the *עול מלכות שמים* to try to face the challenges. He came to the hospital. He was already all fired up with thinking about Hashem and *כל מה דעביד רהמנא לטב עביד*. When he came to the hospital, he thanked Hashem for helping him get to that *madreigah*. He was thinking that he's going to meet his wife now, and she's probably going to be very emotional. He decided he's going to hide his *simchah* in his heart and not show it to his wife.

He's walking in the hallway, and suddenly he meets a doctor, and he says, "What's the story with my daughter?" "Just now there was a *shinui letovah*, and it's a possibility that your daughter was saved from death." He said his heart skipped a beat. He thanked Hashem. He said, "Hashem should send her a *refuah sheleimah bemeheirah*." The *matzav* continued to improve, and a few hours later, the doctors said, "Take your daughter home so she shouldn't be exposed to the other illnesses in the hospital." They got means of transportation. They went home. They arrived home minutes before Shabbos. That Friday night, Rav Nochum was sitting and thanking Hashem for the *yeshuah gedolah*. He was extremely elevated. He was joyous in his heart for the *yeshuah* that Hashem brought him, that even in such a difficult time, he was able to be *omed benisayon* and not have any *ta'anos* on Hashem.

Now he said an interesting thing. That Friday night, he opened up a *sefer*. Every Friday night, he had a *minhag* to learn a *sefer* called the *Be'er Mayim Chaim*. He would open it up to the *parshah*, and whichever page he opened it to, he would start learning from there. So he opened up the *sefer* on that Friday night, and he saw a *ma'amar* that was explaining *Kaddish* *רבה ויתקדש שמייה רבא*. It says the *malachim* said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: What do You have from human beings? *Mah enosh*, what are people that You make them *chashuv*? The *melachim* were *mekatreg* against humans to Hashem. What did they say to Hashem? People only thank You when everything is going their way, but when things are not going their way, they get upset. So, when a guy does that, they put him in a *nisayon*, one of his parents dies, and he calls out and says *רבה ויתקדש שמייה רבא*, and that counters the *ta'anah* of the *melachim*. But he says if a person is *meshabeach* Hakadosh Baruch Hu, he raises Him and he's *mekadesh* Him, so there's no reason for him to experience a tragedy that will cause him to say *רבה ויתקדש שמייה רבא*.

He says, "I have no *safek* that my daughter was *zocheh* to remain alive because I didn't lose my *emunah*. I was *mekabel* the *gezeirah* and tried my best to do it *be'ahavah*. That's why I was *zocheh* that I didn't have to say *Kaddish* after her." *Baruch Hashem*, she got married, and he was *zocheh* to see from her *doros yesharim umevurachim*.

Rabosai, let us have *rachmanus* on ourselves. Let us do what we have to do to ensure our serenity, our peace in our life, and appreciate the many *tovos* of Hashem.

## IN CONCLUSION

We are here in this world to acknowledge that everything that we have is from Hashem. One of the pillars of *Yiddishkeit*, a bigger principle than *emunah*, even, according to the *gedolei mussar*, is to notice, feel, and thank Hashem for the *chessed* that He gives us all the time. When we focus on the *avodah* of recognizing Hashem as the source of all of the *chessed* that we enjoy, it brings us many benefits. Some of these are: (1) We strengthen the cornerstone of our *avodas Hashem*, which is developing a relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. (2) We develop the *middah* of having *hakaras hatov* to Hashem - which determines our level of *avodas Hashem*. (3) We will have more *simchas hachaim*, serenity, and peace of mind. (4) Hashem will save us from *tzaros*, or He will minimize unavoidable suffering and give us great *yeshuos*. This week (*bli neder*), I will decide to be a person who builds a relationship with Hashem based on *hakaras hatov*.









