

transcends the prayers of an individual. The *Bais Aharon* (Karlin) teaches that when one prays with a *minyán*, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, is present, thus elevating and granting greater efficacy to one's prayers. The *Zohar HaKadosh* observes that when one prays alone, the supplicant is scrutinized by Hashem as to his worthiness. A communal request does not pass through such a demanding channel. An individual's *tefillah* as part of that of the community will be accepted.

The *Yismach Yisrael* wrote in a letter to his *chassidim*, "I request from those who are involved in business to always *daven* in the *bais chassidim* (the *bais hamedrash*) – and never miss. Even if there is no *minyán* and they will be compelled to wait for one, they should wait. (Obviously, they should recite *Tehillim* or learn Torah.) I guarantee this will not cause them a loss. On the contrary, it will engender blessing in their *parnassah*, livelihood. This will also train their children... to go twice daily to the *bais hamedrash*."

The *Kaminetzer Mashgiach* (*Eretz Yisrael*), *Horav Moshe Aharon Stern*, *zl*, was meticulous concerning *tefillah b'tzibbur*. He would instruct *chassanim*, prior to marriage, never to pray alone at home, claiming that this was the first step on the path to deviating from a Torah lifestyle. Even if there is no *minyán*, one should make the effort to pray alone in the *shul*, because: A) the *shul's* ambiance is more conducive to prayer, thus causing the supplicant to express greater devotion and feeling; B) if one prays alone at home, it will lower his esteem in the eyes of his wife. He once inquired of a six-year-old child how his *abba* puts on *Tefillin*. The child proceeded to demonstrate how his father puts on *Tefillin*. *Rav Moshe Aharon* then went over to the father and rebuked him for *davening* at home. How else would a six-year-old boy know how his father puts on *Tefillin*?

Rav Moshe Aharon Stern once said (concerning a young married man whose presence at *minyán* was, at best, sporadic), "If my daughter was engaged to a boy, and I was informed a week prior to the wedding that he did not regularly pray with a *minyán* – I would not break the engagement. Had I known from the outset that this was the case, however, I would never have agreed to the match in the first place. A boy who does not come to the *yeshivah* to pray is not serious."

Incidentally, his attitude concerning late arrival at *minyán* was no different: "How can a person be late for prayers? If the *Kohen Gadol* who came to serve in the *Kadosh HaKadoshim*, Holy of Holies, would have tarried for even an instant, the consequences would have been devastating."

Apparently, for some, the designation *talmid chacham/ben Torah*, embodies more than purely Torah erudition. It defines the entire demeanor of the individual.

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Va'ani Tefillah

Bareich aleinu... את השנה הזאת ha'shanah ha'zos. Bless us...this year

B'zeias apecha tochal lechem, "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" (*Bereishis* 3:19). Is this a curse – or a blessing? *Horav Yitzchak Kirzner, zl*, explains that people would now have to work to earn a living. The idyllic state of living in Paradise had come to a quick end. As a result of their sin, Adam and Chavah had plummeted from their original spiritual perch to a life filled with challenges. Had they remained on their exalted spiritual level, earning a livelihood would have had a negative connotation. Why waste so much precious time? Now, however, they would be challenged to spend their time wisely, because remaining ensconced in Paradise was no longer an option. *Rav Kirzner, zl*, quotes *Rabbeinu Bachya* who posits that, once Adam sinned, he needed the pressure of not knowing from where his next meal would come. He would have to make use of large amounts of time wisely.

Let us return to our question: curse or blessing? It depends upon the person. If he rises to the challenges and emerges triumphant, then earning a living becomes the blessing that helps to shape his character and to teach him the *middos*, attributes, of *emunah*, faith, and *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem. If he fails the challenge, then learning a livelihood becomes his curse; it becomes the sinkhole that takes him down. Once we are removed from the utopian spiritual lifestyle associated with Paradise, we must grapple with life on our own, relying solely on our faith and trust in Hashem. This could be a blessing.

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תשע"ה

פרשת מקץ

ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף ראה נתתי אתך על כל ארץ מצרים Then Pharaoh said to Yosef. "See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt." (41:41)

Hakoras hatov, recognizing a favor and paying gratitude, is a defining *middah*, character trait. One who is an ingrate is not a *mentch*, decent human being. Nonetheless, some individuals who, although not by nature ingrates, find themselves hard-pressed to recognize that (a) they owe something to someone, (b) that they have sufficient reason to show their appreciation. In other words, they seek every excuse to justify their lack of gratitude. They owe no one for anything.

We all know people who seek excuses not to show their gratitude. We observe another form of character deficiency. A person helps; he is acting on someone's behalf, be it a job, a marriage partner, or simply an act of lovingkindness. Once he has performed his good deed, he expects constant recognition. "Remember how you got here and who helped you along the way." If, Heaven forbid, a day passes and the beneficiary neglects to pay his respects and laud his benefactor for everything – then he is an ingrate. Yes, there are people like that. They thrive on and need constant recognition.

Indeed, *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, suggests that Pharaoh was like that. He elevated Yosef from slavery to monarchy, which was certainly no simple feat. No one other than Pharaoh (with a "little" manipulation from Hashem) could have achieved this transformation. If so, why does Pharaoh say to Yosef, "See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt"? A few *pesukim* later, Pharaoh "reminds" Yosef, "I am Pharaoh." Obviously, he is Pharaoh and, undoubtedly, he is the only one who has the power to elevate Yosef. Why does Pharaoh have to issue these "subtle" reminders?

Rav Sholom explains that Pharaoh was intimating to Yosef, "Remember who gave you this job. I am not asking for anything from you -- no accolades, no gifts, nothing – but that you remember how you got here and who helped you along the way. Do not ever lose sight of the fact that, regardless of what you have become, I am still Pharaoh. Never forget! I will not!"

Pharaoh represents the classic example of the fellow who simply will not let go. He has benefited others, and, in return, he wants recognition. Indeed, he thrives on recognition. If a day goes by and he does not receive his recognition, he will be hurt and upset.

Rav Sholom relates that he heard a similar

exposition with regard to the Angel that informed Manoach and his wife that they would soon have a son (*Shimshon*). At first, Manoach and his wife were uncertain as to the identity of the individual who conveyed the good news to them. Was he a human being or an Angel? The *pasuk* concludes: "The Angel of Hashem did not continue anymore to appear to Manoach and his wife; then Manoach realized that he was an Angel of Hashem" (*Shoftim* 13:21). How did the fact that the Angel did not return serve as an indicator that he was, in fact, an angel?

Rav Sholom explains that a human being might not have placed great demands on Manoach and his wife, but recognition is a given. He would like them to talk about him, tell their friends, make a point of coming over to him, so that he could remind them that, if not for "him," they might still be childless. That is human nature. Angels are not that way. Thus, if he did not return, he must have been a supernatural being. One must always show his appreciation by expressing his gratitude. On the other hand, the benefactor should keep it to himself and just feel good that Hashem "allowed" him to be His conduit for helping another Jew.

ויתן לו את אסנת בת פוטיפרע כהן אן לאשה And he gave him Osnas bas Potifar, chief of On, for a wife. (41:45)

Certain words in the English language are anathema to the Jewish religion. Coincidence, believing that things "happen" without being designated by G-d, is the antithesis of Jewish belief. We could devote books to support the notion of *Hashgachah Pratis*, Divine Providence, but why look anywhere but in our *parsha*? This is, of course, true throughout the Torah, but the story of Yosef and his brothers and the need to have him descend to Egypt so that they would eventually follow, is a classic example of *Hashgachah*. Yosef's marriage to Osnas is a classic tale of *Hashgachah Pratis* as stated by *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, and cited by *Daas Zekeinim* and *Chezkuni*. It is a case of Divine Providence, but, furthermore, it is an example of a powerful message never to give up hope. The little girl that was rejected by her family ended up being the progenitress of two of our greatest *Shevatim*. First, however, let me relate the story.

Shechem violated Dinah, daughter of Yaakov *Avinu*. Dinah conceived and gave birth to a little girl who was shunned by her uncles, since she represented moral violation and a terrible incursion against the Patriarchal family. Yaakov took pity on his granddaughter and gave her

an amulet which would protect her. The young girl, who was named Osnas, was eventually sold to (and later adopted by) Potifar, whose wife attempted to seduce Yosef. When she was rejected, Potifar's wife slandered Yosef, who was saved only because Osnas, who knew the truth, defended him to the Egyptian Priests that comprised the court of law. (As a result of being found innocent by them, Yosef later passed the edict that the Egyptian government had no control over priestly land.) When Yosef was elevated to the position of Viceroy, Pharaoh sought a suitable wife for him. Pharaoh figured that, although Yosef's roots (as a Jewish slave) were murky, by having him marry an Egyptian woman, his standing would be elevated in the eyes of the populace.

Because Yosef was quite handsome, Pharaoh had him paraded through Egypt. This brought all of the eligible women out. They all threw something at him in order to get his attention. Osnas did not have anything to throw, other than the amulet that her grandfather had given her. When Yosef retrieved the amulet, he realized that standing before him was a member of his family. The rest is history. What is history? How should one teach history? It is the recognition of the Divine Hand coordinating all events, so that one sees how everything that occurs -- both in the world and in his personal life -- is all a part of Hashem's Divine Plan.

Stories abound which underscore Hashem's Divine Providence over each and every one of us -- personally. One of the more well-known stories (of which there are a number of variations) is Tuvia Ariel's story, "7401." It seemed to him that life was coincidental. Interestingly, the last four digits of his childhood residential phone number were 7401. Likewise, the last four digits of his social security number were also 7401. Years later, when he found himself serving as a volunteer in a *kibbutz*, he met a man, a carpenter by trade, a man who rarely spoke. He was a Holocaust survivor who had escaped Auschwitz. He, too, had a number tattooed on his arm. Yes -- the last four digits on his arm were 7401. When Tuvia inquired concerning the numbers, the carpenter became visibly anxious. He said, "Do not talk about it. I lost my entire family, my father; my mother; there was a brother behind me in line (*selektzia*) and a brother in front of me. I am the only one who survived. Never bring this up to me. I want to forget." Tuvia acquiesced to the carpenter's request, until one day he met someone...

Tuvia is a man of many stories, his own life serving as an agent for *chesed*, for helping others. Indeed, he considers himself to be an agent to make life easier and better for others. While this is true of all of us, most do not think about life in that manner. *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, writes: "Man is created *l'ho'il l'achrinei*, to help others." Tuvia took his own misfortune and transformed it into an opportunity for helping others, but this story is not about Tuvia.

As a volunteer in the *kibbutz*, he was once operating a large grinding machine, when his leg was caught in the blades. Immediately, he was sucked in. Quick thinking and incredible courage inspired him to self-amputate his leg before his whole body was sucked into the machine. As a result, Tuvia became an amputee with little ability to work at the *kibbutz*. He worked as a

taxi driver, picking up tourists at the airport, ferrying them to the main office of the touring agency where he was employed. Due to his limitations, the agency would not use him as a tourist guide. This did not stop Tuvia. He did his job, knowing that wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he was acting as an agent of Hashem in one of His Divine scenarios.

One day he picked up an American tourist. His attire bespoke wealth, his attitude bespoke obnoxious wealth. His manner was crude and disrespectful. Tuvia found it difficult to be his usual friendly self; nonetheless, he acted diplomatically, responding to questions in a respectful manner, saving his usual congenial nature for other tourists. This man was not going to receive the "time of day" from Tuvia unless he asked for it. They were halfway between the airport and the tourist office, when the man yelled, "Stop the car! Pull over!" Obviously, Tuvia's cold, indifferent attitude affected a response from the passenger. Suddenly, someone was not bending over backward to impress him.

The man looked at Tuvia and curtly said, "You think I am a lazy, materialistic, American tourist, who comes to your country to throw his money around? Well, you are wrong. I paid my dues! I suffered plenty!" To prove his statement, he pulled up the sleeve of his shirt and pointed to the tattoo on his arm, "I lost my entire family. I had a brother behind me and a brother in front of me -- all gone."

Tuvia was about to lose it. He saw Hashem's Divine Plan forming before his very eyes. "Was your brother's name Shimon?" he asked, the words shakily coming from his mouth. The man's face went from crimson to white. "I am not taking you to the tourist office. We are making a detour." The man did not complain. Suddenly, the boisterous American became still, as they traveled an hour and a half to the north, to the *kibbutz* where Tuvia had worked ten years earlier.

They arrived, and Tuvia inquired about the whereabouts of the carpenter who had befriended him. He did not even say, "Hello." He just asked, "Was your brother's name Reuven?" Another face turned white. Tuvia returned to the taxi and told the American tourist, "Come. I am taking you to your brother."

He led him to the carpenter's shed and left. He did not want to infringe upon the poignancy of the moment. Two brothers, who had been separated for years, both thinking the other had died, were finally reunited. Tuvia stood by his taxi and wept -- first, tears of sadness, and then tears of joy. Why did he weep? How did he know? When the American tourist showed him his tattooed arm, he noted the last four digits of his number -- 7402.

Hashgachah Pratis -- Divine Providence.

**ויוסף הוא הנשלים על הארץ הוא המושביר לכל עם הארץ
Now Yosef -- he was the viceroy over the land, he was
the provider to all the people. (42:6)**

Simply translated, the *pasuk* informs us that Yosef was both ruler and provider to the people. *Horav Moshe Cheifetz, zl* (cited by *Tzeil Ha'Eidah*), derives from here that a community/group accepts the guidance/rulership/governance of a person only after he has

shown that he cares/provides for all of them. Thus, he interprets the *pasuk* as: Yosef was the (accepted) ruler because he was the provider to all the people. When the ruler provides, people listen; when the ruler thinks only of himself or those close to him, he will eventually deal with a mutiny, people rebelling against him. Obviously, one achieves distinction through the efforts of a select group of individuals dedicated to his growth. They spend the money; they have the vested interests; they are the ones who have the vision and realize the importance of their candidate's ascension to prominence. If he is to endure and achieve success in governance, if his legislation is to be accepted by all the people, he must demonstrate that he serves all of the people -- not just those who catapulted him to fame.

This idea applies with regard to anyone who seeks to reach out to the wider community, to be accepted by the *hamon am*, by every member of the community, regardless of religious affiliation. One has to recognize that people are out there, other than those who have special interests. Unless people feel that they are being served, they will neither feel a debt of gratitude, nor accept anyone's guidance: "I will listen to you when you will do something for me." "What have you done for me lately?" is an often asked question by those who for whatever reason (justified or not) remain on the fringe.

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita, relates that *Rav Shraga Feivel Gibraltar, zl*, was an incredible person, a dynamo, who not only initiated and established a number of *chesed* organizations in Ramat HaSharon, but also maintained them and saw that they serviced all of the members of the Jewish community -- not only the *chareidim*, Orthodox/observant members. He started *Hatzalah*, a *gemach* for medical equipment and other programs. He had a singular goal: *l'harbos kavod Shomayim*, increase the glory of Heaven. If, through his efforts, Hashem's Name would be glorified, then it would all be worth it.

Rav Shraga Feivel explained that his goal was to reach the not-yet observant crowd. When he would come to a home and invite its members to join a Torah study session, the usual response was a question: "What have you done for us lately?" "You seem to care only for yourself and your kind. What about us?" He developed a strategy: "Now, when I come to their door, I can respond; I started (and maintain): *Hatzalah*; the *gemach* for medical equipment; and the food bank -- everything from which you seem to benefit. I now have a foot in the door. They owe me. Now I can 'suggest' that they attend a *shiur*, attend a sponsored *Shabbos* meal -- anything that will break the ice and encourage." People listened to him, because he did not make empty promises. He delivered -- first -- then he asked for their participation.

Many of these newly-observant or semi-observant Israelis would attend the *tefillas*, services, over the *Yamim Nora'im*, High Holy Days, just to listen to him lead the services. When he poured out his heart in prayer to Hashem, they knew that he was praying for them, as well as for the members of his own family. They all felt part of his family. On the last *Yom Kippur* of his life, when his body was riddled with the devastating disease to which he eventually succumbed, he insisted on leading

the services. His strength ebbed from him, as he became weaker and weaker until he could not go on any longer. He was about to allow someone else to take over, when he realized, "Why do so many people who are hardly observant attend the services in my *shul*? It is only because they come to hear me. If I stop *davening* for the *amud*, they will slowly trickle out and return to their homes, office, beach, or wherever their heart leads them. If I can prevent them from eating for another hour, then I must do so -- regardless of my pain."

This is the meaning of increasing *kavod Shomayim*, when a person negates himself and acts only for the glory of Hashem.

כולנו בני איש אחד נחנו

All of us, sons of one man are we. (42:11)

The Egyptian viceroy (Yosef) had a hard time believing that ten brothers, an entire family, were required to come down to Egypt to purchase food. If it was a question of assistance, one or two brothers could have gone with a few servants. Why did all of the brothers leave their individual families if the job could have been carried out by a few brothers? *Ramban* explains that, being brothers, their father, Yaakov *Avinu*, wanted them to remain together. It was not a matter of strength in numbers; it was just that Yaakov did not want the members of his family separated from one another. This was despite the danger of traveling and spending time away from their usual learning sessions. Apparently, family harmony, in which the brothers remain closely bonded to one another, took precedence.

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, derives from here the overriding importance of *achdus*, unity, love among members of *Klal Yisrael*. It is worth putting oneself into a *sakanah*, danger, and even allowing him to minimize the time devoted to learning Torah, as long as *achdus* is not impugned. *Achdus* is a defining criterion for success in Torah. One who does not get along with others or does not really care about others has difficulty achieving success in Torah. Torah belongs to *Am Yisrael*, a collective gift to the entire nation. We are all members of this august group. To negate or be selective in whom one considers "worthy" of his friendship is a strike against his success in Torah.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* goes on to teach an important lesson with regard to *achdus*. There are those who claim to be committed to *achdus* and *ahavas Yisrael*, but care only about the totality of *Klal Yisrael*. When they are asked to assist the *klal* -- they are ready. What about the "little guy," however, who is also a part of *Klal Yisrael*? Do they care about each individual as part of the whole -- or do they care only about the whole? The *mitzvah* of *ahavas Yisrael* is to love each individual Jew. The *mitzvah* of *achdus Yisrael* is to care about each individual Jew as part of the whole *Am Yisrael*. Having said this, we should ask ourselves: Are we fulfilling this *mitzvah* correctly?

In an alternative exposition, *Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*, cites the *Divre Yisrael* (Modzitz) who explains that the brothers all traveled together to Egypt so that they could be assured of having a *minyan*, quorum, for *tefillah*. *Tefillah b'tzibbur*, communal prayer,