

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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Foundation

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life

LESSONS

BEYOND THE NORM

In 2014, Detroit was hit with flooding. Many families had sudden financial losses—and huge cleanup jobs. A group of young men launched the Detroit Chessed Project. They replaced furniture and mattresses and recruited volunteers to clean basements.

On Chol Hamoed Succos, the group met for a *simchas beis hashoevah*, where each member shared what they had accomplished. One person had recruited clothing donations for a year. Another had arranged for a chain store to donate truckloads of bedding, lamps, and accessories. A professional caterer revealed the number of food packages he distributed each week. The others began volunteering to sponsor them, pledging thousands of dollars in a few minutes. Then the singing and festivities continued.

At the end of the event, the host approached the non-Jewish saxophone player. “I appreciate you agreeing to stay so late,” he said. “How much do we owe you for tonight?”

“Please take the money and put it toward your program,” the musician said. “I have never seen such generosity and joyful giving. You are an incredible group of people.”

As Jews, we are charged to behave in a way that will lead others to recognize the greatness of Hashem. We must display character traits that are so incredible they are clearly recognized as G-dly in nature. It must be clear to the world that our positive attributes are not due to just being nice people, but our service of Hashem. As Rav Shimon Schwab often commented, “Where *mentschlichkeit* ends its achievements — at that place, Yiddishkeit begins.”

Adapted from A Life Worth Living by Rabbi Shragee Freedman at LivingKiddushHashem.org, with the permission of the publisher



gem

OF THE WEEK

RETURN TO GRACE

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

After the *luchos* were given for the second time, *klal Yisrael* was again commanded to build a Mishkan for them. *Cheit ha'eigel* had jeopardized this command, with far-reaching significance. The Mishkan would now be constructed in the shadow of a completely new experience.

The people now realized how imperfect they still were, how much they needed to work on themselves, how greatly they were in need of atonement. They had experienced a relationship with Hashem in all the severity of His judgment, but also in all the fullness of His grace—from the depths of rejection, to the heights of Divine favor regained.

The Mishkan became the place from which their ideals would shine forth forever to individual and community alike. It was the place where, no matter what error or weakness, they would find renewed strength to work their way up again, to find the strength to persevere in their calling, and find Hashem's help.

Thus, the *cheit ha'eigel* saga was recorded for all time, placed in between

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

ASHREI:
A SLOW DESCENT



In Shemone Esrei and Tachanun, Shacharis attains its highest point. There, we are in the world of pure spirit.

Now, we descend again into the world of everyday life. This last part is opened by the 145th psalm, Ashrei. This is because it shows with impressive clarity how the omnipotent G-d and mighty King, Whom we have come to recognize through the gradual ascent of prayer, is also the universal provider, the loving and just providence, close to all those “who call upon Him in truth.”

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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THE BLESSING OF THE LIGHTS


By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

In the first of Birchos Kerias Shema, the beginning and ending of the *bracha* thank Hashem for creating the “lights”—the daily cycle of light and darkness, the sun, moon and stars. However, most of the *bracha* between the opening and conclusion speaks only of how the *malachim* praise Hashem for the infinite wisdom of Creation.

When we grow accustomed to something, we generally take it for granted. The sun and moon are perfect examples of this. Our sun is merely one of trillions and trillions of stars; stars come in all sizes and degrees of heat. Our sun is exactly the right size, temperature and distance from the planet to support life. If it were any larger or any closer, everything on Earth would burn. On the other hand, if it were any smaller, cooler or further away, our planet would be nothing more than a gigantic freezer. Earth’s atmosphere insulates us from the sun’s ultraviolet rays and has the perfect mixture of gases for humans to breathe.


A Roman emperor once asked Rabbi Yehoshua to show him the Jewish G-d. Rabbi Yehoshua took him outdoors and told him to look directly at the sun. Naturally, the emperor said that he was unable to do that. “The sun is merely one of Hashem’s servants,” Rabbi Yehoshua said. “If you can’t look at Hashem’s servant, then surely you cannot see Hashem!”

When we say Kiddush Levanah, Chazal tell us that it is like greeting the Shechinah. The sun rises and sets every day, but the moon renews its cycle only once a month. As Rabbeinu Yonah explains, although we cannot see Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we can perceive Him through His creations. The inspiration we feel when we see the new moon is therefore comparable to greeting the Shechinah.

The wisdom of Hashem in the *meoros* is infinite, greater than we can comprehend. The *malachim* have a much greater understanding of these phenomena. Therefore, we invoke the continuous praises of the *malachim*, for the lights, and for all the miraculous complexities of the universe. 

the command to build the Mishkan and the execution of that command. It provides documented proof that it is possible to be forgiven, no matter what.

But the most important point to consider is this: the greatest national crime was committed, and the highest grace was attained from G-d—without a sanctuary, and without *korbanos*. If any more proof were needed that the Mishkan and *korbanos* in and of themselves do not secure G-d’s favor, but are only guides to attain His grace, such proof is found in these events.

In Pekudei, the precious metals used in this *mishkan* are totaled. The amount pales in comparison to the treasures used for the Beis Hamikdash later on; nevertheless, neither Beis Hamikdash became as great as the Mishkan. Only in the Mishkan did the Shechinah appear for all to see, only the Mishkan never fell into the hands of an enemy. The second Beis Hamikdash, despite all its splendor, lacked even the primary *aron* and the *urim v’tumim*. Grandeur means little to the essence of a *mishkan*. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.




wonder WORLD

BUSY AS A BEE



What type of bees live in a hive?

There are around 20,000 different bee species in the world and over 2 trillion bees. Of these, only eight kinds of bees produce honey. Honeybees live in hives, each with 20,000 to 80,000 members. Each hive has one queen bee, thousands of worker bees, and hundreds of drone bees. The queen is the biggest, and lays eggs to make more baby bees and to keep the hive unified. Most of the bees in the hive are workers. They are all female, and it is their role to build the hive, look after the baby bees, and collect food. There are far fewer drones, whose only job is to serve the queen when she needs them. 

Adapted from the Niflaos HaBoreh Explorer series by Rabbi Yaakov Lubin

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