

life

LESSONS

A MAN OF MANY FACETS

The first time Rav Sholom Schwadron came to the home of Rabbi Paysach Krohn's parents, he brought a huge Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah with him. In the margins of every page of this *sefer* were notes from his grandfather, the Maharsham. Rav Sholom would spend hours every day working to decipher the comments of the Maharsham, and he eventually wrote a *sefer* on his grandfather's comments on the entire Shulchan Aruch, called Daas Torah.

Rav Sholom learned 18 *perakim* of Mishnayos every day, six *perakim* before each meal. Many times, before he sat down to eat, Rav Sholom asked Rabbi Krohn and his brothers to say "*Muttar lach.*" A young Kalman Krohn asked him what he was being *matir*.

"I couldn't finish six *perakim* before the meal," Rav Sholom said, "so I needed to be *matir*."

Rav Sholom would record himself reading *mussar sefarim* on tapes, and he would cry as he recorded them. Rav Yisroel Grossman traveled with Rav Sholom when he went to America for the first time, and on the way he saw there that Rav Sholom was crying. Rav Yisroel asked why.

Rav Sholom answered, "I'm afraid to go to America." He was listening to his tear-filled recording of Mesilas Yesharim, fortifying himself against anything that could possibly happen in America.

We know of Rav Sholom as a noted speaker and storyteller, but we have to remember that he was a tremendous *talmid chacham* and a *baki in halacha*.

Courtesy of Agudas Yisroel of America



gem

OF THE WEEK

FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The state and the land that held us as slaves represented, at the time, the height of statecraft and human power. Egypt harnessed its full range of natural resources.

But it was from Egypt that Hashem brought us out: He shattered the power of men and the forces of nature, transforming and destroying them at His Will. He passed judgment on human perversity and the worship of nature, smashing tyranny and raising up the downtrodden innocent, saving them and fulfilling His promise.

By shaping the destinies of men and intervening directly in earthly affairs, by delivering us and bringing us out from the land of Egypt, Hashem, in His justice and love, inscribed Himself forever on our consciousness. The One Who can say to us *asher hotzeisicha mei'Eretz Mitzrayim* is the One Whom we acknowledge for all time as the sole Shaper of our destiny, wherever we go.

Egypt was our *beis avadim*, where we were slaves from birth. That we

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

BIRKAS HAMAZON:
REPEATING THANKS



After enumerating all of the spiritual and physical benefits that Hashem confers upon us "always, every day, and every hour," the paragraph of Ve'al Hakol summarizes them once more, quoting the *pasuk* that Birkas Hamazon is based on: *v'achalta, v'savata, u'veirachta*. The repeated rendition of thanks at the beginning and end of the *bracha* is specifically mentioned in the Gemara (Brachos 49a). Having received a gift from on high, we must say thank you even before we have benefited from it and without knowing its nature, for whatever Hashem does is for the best.

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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HUMBLING EVENTS

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

I was recently asked for my thoughts on recent developments that have taken place in the Gaza war, and the frightening increase in antisemitism worldwide. I take this opportunity to share my thoughts with readers of this newsletter.

Looking through Tanach, we can get a glimpse of, at least, what our first response should be. Achav, king of the Ten Tribes, was among the worst of its kings—he was married to a non-Jewish princess from Lebanon, Izevel, and worshipped her god with a passion. He had many encounters with Eliyahu Hanavi and other prophets, but never took their warnings seriously.

Achav owned a vineyard, which was adjacent to another vineyard belonging to a man named Navos. Wanting to expand his property, Achav offered to buy Navos's land. Navos refused to sell; the vineyard had been an inheritance from his father. Achav was upset. Izevel told him not to worry, that she would make sure that he got the vineyard. She arranged for a *beis din* in Navos's city to accuse him of a crime deserving of the death penalty and hired false witnesses to testify against him. Navos's properties were then confiscated by the king's estate. When Achav heard the news, he gleefully removed the fence between the two vineyards and claimed Navos's land as his own.

Hashem sent Eliyahu Hanavi with a harsh message: In the same place where the dogs had lapped up Navos's flowing blood, they would one day lap on his. In addition, his family would be wiped out. This time, Achav got the message. He put on sackcloth and fasted. It was far from full *teshuvah*, but it was enough to stave off the decree. "Have you seen that Achav was humbled?" Hashem told Eliyahu. "I will not bring the evil in his days, but in the days of his son."

Achav's story echoes an earlier episode in the days of Rechavam ben Shlomo, who had become more and more arrogant the stronger his rule became. He began to flout the Torah, and the people followed his lead. In response, the king of Egypt attacked, threatening the kingdom with annihilation. A *navi* came to the king and delivered a message, castigating him in the name of Hashem. Here, too, the king was humbled. "Hashem is right," he said. In response, Hashem said, "I will not destroy them...they will merely be servants to Egypt."

When Hashem speaks, the first thing we need to do is humble ourselves before Him. This in itself is a *zechus* for us. When we realize that times are not normal, we can begin to figure out what we need to do to improve. Today's events are a clear message from Heaven that Hashem wants more from us. Our daily lives must reflect this. If we recognize that life cannot continue as usual, if we remove ourselves from frivolous pursuits and indulgences, we will have acquired a great *zechus* before Hashem. 🕯

had been forcibly deprived of our freedom was completely forgotten, and slavery was considered our natural state. Remembering this, we realize that, socially, we were at the point of extinction when G-d brought us out to freedom and independence.

Hence, more than any other nation, we owe to Hashem whatever we possess. All that the Egyptians had denied us was restored to us by G-d Himself: our personal individualities, the right to acquire possessions, and the possessions themselves.

Consequently, G-d alone has dominion over our lives and our property, and we belong exclusively to Him. To His service we dedicate our lives, capabilities and possessions, and we acknowledge Him alone as the Guide of all our actions.

Only subservience to G-d freed us from servitude to man. Only on this condition were we liberated and granted independence. Whereas people of other nations are indebted to G-d for their creation and existence, we are indebted to Him for our historical and social existence as well. 🕯

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



wonder WORLD

THE FOOD OF CIVILIZATION



Which of the shiva minim takes up the most space on planet Earth?

One of the most important plants there is, more land is dedicated to growing wheat than any other crop in the world. Wheat covers 545 million acres of planet Earth. It can be used to make an incredible variety of foods, including cookies, halva, beer, noodles, cereal, couscous, and of course bread! Wheat is also nutritious, containing vegetable protein, fiber, and vitamin B. Whole wheat, which contains the bran and germ, is more nutritious than refined wheat, which has been stripped of its outer layer. Along with six other crops, wheat is one of the *shiva minim* of Eretz Yisrael. It is also one of the five species of grain, which hold a special status in *halacha*. Wheat has shaped human history, and is still very important in feeding people around the world. 🕯

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