

# SHABBOS: THE SOURCE OF BLESSING 2



AYIN WAS IN A CRISIS. HE WAS CRESTFALLEN AND DEPRESSED because his offering was not accepted, while Hevel's offering was accepted. Therefore, Hashem told him, "*Lapesach chatas rovetz*,<sup>1</sup> *chatas* crouches in ambush at the entrance" — know that there is such a thing as a *yetzer hara*, and it is trying to get hold of you. Be forewarned and do not succumb.

The *yetzer hara* has many names. Shlomo called it *sonei*. Others called it *ra*. The Gemara uses a number of names to identify it.<sup>2</sup> But here Hakadosh Baruch Hu calls it *chatas*. What is the meaning of that word?

*Chatas* means to lose out, to miss. Thus it refers not so much to the wrong things you did, but to the right things you failed to do. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is telling us that the greatest peril of the *yetzer hara* is not in what he can cause a person to *do*, but in what he can cause a person to *fail* to do.

---

1. Bereishis 4:7

2. Succah 52a

***The greatest peril of the yetzer hara is what he can cause a person to fail to accomplish***

**T**HIS POINT IS CRUCIAL, BECAUSE WE ARE IN THIS WORLD TO accomplish. Of course, while we're accomplishing we should try to avoid any misstep. But to go through this world merely avoiding wrong deeds is not sufficient. If the *yetzer hara* has managed to persuade a person to refrain from doing things he could have done, that's the greatest achievement he could hope for in leading a person astray.

And so Hashem told Kayin, "Here's a golden opportunity. Your brother Hevel has triumphed over you, and you are so downcast. If you'll reinforce yourself — go shake hands with him and tell him, 'Congratulations' — you will gain the upper hand." That action would have made Kayin better than Hevel. Instead, not only was Kayin jealous, he was angry and vengeful, and he lost out on the greatest opportunity of his life. At that moment he could have gained a crown of glory.

The Gemara comments on the Torah's words, "Hashem blessed the seventh day," that Hakadosh Baruch Hu made Shabbos a day of berachah. To what berachah does the Gemara refer?

You might say that the greatest blessing a person could get is happiness in this world. Everybody wants it, but, of course, there's a higher success — there is happiness forever and ever, in the World to Come. And both are indicated in the berachah of Shabbos. When it's utilized properly, Shabbos is both *olam hazeh* (this world) and *Olam Haba* (World to Come). You may claim you don't care about happiness in this world, but Hashem does care; He wants you to be happy in this world as well. Most people are unaware of this purpose of Shabbos; they fulfill only the barest essentials of Shabbos observance by neglecting to do the wrong things — they do a few right things, too, *but they miss the point*.

***Thinking that the world was created from nothing***

**W**HAT IS THE POINT OF SHABBOS? ONE VERY IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IS that Shabbos celebrates the fact that Hashem made the world *ex nihilo* — *yesh me'ayin*.<sup>3</sup> If you spend time on Shabbos thinking about that, it is certainly an achievement. Next Shabbos, make it your business to take out one minute to think that before Creation, there was *ayin* — nothing; and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "*Yehi*" — that's

---

3. See *The Beginning* p.56 (2:3), *Sing You Righteous* p. 254 (541), *Nation Is Born* p. 276 (20:11)

why we call Him *Yud-Hei-Vav-Hei*: He said, “*Yehi*,” and everything came into existence. That thought is a mitzvah, and you can know that this Shabbos, at least once in your life, you accomplished something on Shabbos! Many people say the words “*zecher lema’aseh bereishis*,” a remembrance of Creation, but don’t think about what they’re saying — what a tragedy. If you are able to devote two minutes to this thought — a minute Friday night and a minute Shabbos morning — you’ve done so much more. At each *seudah* (meal), for example, spend one minute thinking that Hashem made the world out of nothing, *yesh me’ayin*, and you’ve fulfilled one of the great purposes of Shabbos. The more times you focus on that thought, the more you’ve accomplished; but that is not the whole lesson. That’s still *chatas*, because there are other points that you’re missing.

A crucial point of Shabbos is that the world was made for *ta’anug* — happiness. If you are not aware of that, you surely won’t utilize the Shabbos for it. Many of us are so indoctrinated with the idea that this world is nothing that as we sit down and eat the cholent and the chicken, we may say nothing.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu says this is *chatas* — you’re missing out. Shabbos comes to remind us of *ma’aseh bereishis*, at which time, “And Hashem saw all that He did and behold it was *tov me’od*.” “*Tov me’od*” doesn’t mean *very bad*; it means *very good*. In this statement Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving us information we should never forget. He is referring here not to *Olam Haba* but to this world, as it says in *Chumash*, “Let the *earth* bring forth....” Hashem is speaking about plants, animals, fish, birds — they’re all *tov me’od* — not just good, but *very good*. Of course it’s good if He made it; but He said it to us because He wants us to say these same words all our lives: *Ribbono shel Olam*, we congratulate You. You did a great job — *tov me’od*!<sup>4</sup>

### ***Most Jews are blind to this great truth that the world is a good place***

**T**HE *CHOVOS HALEVAVOS* COMMENTS ON THIS PASUK, “HASHEM IS good to all, but they are as blind people”; most people are blind to this. The *Chovos Halevavos* wasn’t talking about nonreligious, liberal Jews. In his days, all Jews were frum Jews. Most Orthodox Jews are blind to this great truth: It’s a good world! The Torah says it’s a good world.

---

4. See *The Beginning* p. 47 (1:31)

And so we begin to understand one function of the Shabbos: It is for us to gain an attitude that this is a good world, a *very* good world. But let's take a look at a practical application of this principle.

Let's say you're a yeshivah bachur (student) and every day after Minchah (afternoon prayer) you walk out of the beis medrash and find a poor man standing there, stretching out his hand. You drop a nickel into his hand and others do the same. But one day you make a mistake and drop in a quarter. He looks at you and thinks, "Oh, there's a fine man!" The next day, in order to gain that look again, you drop another quarter into his hand. From then on, you drop in a quarter each day; you give him a quarter every day for a year. After a while, he starts complaining — "Only a quarter? How about a raise?"

So you see that even though a person is receiving benefits from you, if he keeps getting the same benefit, he gets tired of it and think it's nothing. He won't spend time congratulating you for giving him a quarter; he's spending time criticizing you for not giving more than a quarter!

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us all the good things, and we're tired of it. "What are You giving us?" people ask.

"Why should I thank Hashem?" someone will ask me. He's a healthy man, well fed, living in a comfortable home — why should he thank Hashem? Perhaps he wants more excitement in life, thrills, entertainment. The Torah says, "*Im shamo'a tishma el mitzvosai*,"<sup>5</sup> if you do everything that I've told you, *ve'achalta vesavata*."

Do you hear that great promise? You'll have enough to eat!

Is that all? Tell an American Jew that as a reward for being frum he'll have enough to eat — what about a car? What about vacations? I know a man who took a vacation in the Catskills for two months, but he got bored, so he took another vacation in Switzerland.

When people are blind, they're never happy.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to stop and study what he's giving to us. *Ve'achalta vesavata* — you have enough to eat? You're very lucky! When I lived in Europe, a family next door told us that when they were younger they didn't have enough to eat. When a child asked his mother for another piece of bread, she'd say, "I'm sorry, I can't do it." You have all the bread you want! "*Chatas*," Hakadosh Baruch Hu says: you're missing out — not only in your avodas Hashem, in understanding the truth, but even in *olam hazeh*; you're not enjoying life at all.

---

5. *Devarim* 11:13

In order to enjoy the full benefit of Hakadosh Baruch Hu's gifts, you must understand how great these gifts are; study them. Start with your piece of bread — see how good that piece of bread is. Forget about the chicken or the other foods; think about the piece of bread.

### ***Bread is a pleasure***

ONLY HUMAN BEINGS HAVE BREAD. ANIMALS DON'T HAVE IT. BREAD IS a manufactured thing; it doesn't grow. You have to grind up the grain, make a dough and bake it on the fire. Bread is an art; it's an expense. In the olden times, poor people couldn't bake — they didn't have stoves. The Gemara tells us that they would go to the bakery and ask for the use of the stove.

Bread is a confection, a pleasure. So now we have to get busy thinking. A yeshivah bachur from Boro Park was once telling me he doesn't care about *ta'anugei olam hazeh*, but he has a wristwatch; well, I also have a wristwatch. He drives a car; I never drove a car. He eats ice cream; I don't eat ice cream.

*Rubam ivrim* — they're blind! This blindness is a *cheit*. Everyone needs to learn how to put on Torah glasses. If you look at the world through rosy glasses, you see a rosy, beautiful world. If you look at the world through gloomy glasses, you'll have a gloomy world all your life. The life you have depends on how you look at the world. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives you a pair of eyeglasses right at the beginning: He says "*tov me'od*," it's a very good world; start looking for the goodness of this world.

### ***Mitzvah to have a good time in this world***

THIS IS INCLUDED IN "VAYEVARECH ELOKIM" — HASHEM GAVE A berachah to the seventh day; on that day there is a special mitzvah to have a good time in this world. First of all, you don't work then. What a pleasure! And on Shabbos you eat special things during the *seudos*. People who eat more than they need on Wednesday and Thursday may not appreciate the *seudos* of Shabbos, so it's a mitzvah not to eat much on Friday, to work up an appetite so we'll feel a desire to eat on Shabbos.

When you sit down on Shabbos at the *seudah*, it's a time to get to work; that's the *avodah* of Shabbos. Get busy seeing how good everything is, how good the challah is. Compliment the baalebuste. (If she

didn't bake it, praise other things.) Seeing the delightful foods of Shabbos is a *pesach*, an entrance to seeing the *tov*, the goodness of *olam hazeh*.

The Jew has always been more optimistic about this world than the other peoples of the world, because he's had Shabbos, a day of happiness. Together with his family, he's sat around the table and sung *zemiros* and eaten good foods; therefore his whole life is different. If once in six days you take a vacation and enjoy life, it's going to make the other six days much different. A Jew's life is punctuated with joy — with *oneg Shabbos* — every six days.

If you utilize this day of berachah as a way of replacing the glasses you use to view the world, it will give you the perspective to see the *tov me'od* of the world, and it will change everything in your life.

"*Kol hame'aneg es haShabbos, nosnim lo nachalah beli metzarim*," says the Gemara.<sup>6</sup> If someone causes pleasure on Shabbos, if he goes out of his way to do things that make Shabbos pleasurable, they're going to give him an estate that has no boundaries in *Olam Haba*. This is not a *mashal*. You're going to see great wealth that all belongs to you. You'll take a trip on a "space shuttle," and wherever you go, property belongs to you. Everything in this world has boundaries, but if you're *me'aneg es haShabbos*, your portion in *Olam Haba* will have no boundaries. From world to world, it's all yours — *beli metzarim*.

"*Lehanchil le'ohavai yesh*,"<sup>7</sup> Hashem said — I have the resources to give an estate to those who love Me; "*Ve'otzaroseihem amalei* — I'll fill their treasuries." The numerical value of *yesh* is 310, the Gemara explains (at the end of *Uktzin*); Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give the tzaddikim 310 worlds — not little worlds like this one we live in, but huge worlds.

### ***Shabbos is a day when you can earn tremendous reward in Olam Haba***

**N**OW WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING ABOUT SHABBOS. IT IS A day when you can earn tremendous reward in *Olam Haba*. Of course, if you learn Torah on Shabbos it is even better, but you must not take for granted this principle that Shabbos is meant to teach you about the great happiness that awaits you in this life, and about the infinite happiness of *Olam Haba*.

6. *Shabbos* 118a

7. *Mishlei* 8:21

Concentrate on learning how to enjoy life. Don't do it by running after pleasures. *Pas bamelach tocheil u'mayim bimesurah sishteh*<sup>8</sup> — eat bread and salt, and drink a little water; sleep on the ground and work hard in Torah. Then, "*ashrecha vetov lach — ashrecha ba'olam hazeh vetov lach ba'Olam Haba.*" I can understand that it's good for you in *Oham Haba*, but how does it bring you joy in *olam hazeh*?

This is the crucial point: If you learn how to utilize life, *ashrecha ba'olam hazeh* even if you eat nothing more than bread and salt and a cup of water — but you concentrate on what a pleasure bread is and how good salt is.

### ***The miracle of bread***

**W**HERE DOES BREAD COME FROM? ACTUALLY, IT COMES FROM THE wind. The wind blows carbon dioxide. If that carbon dioxide passes by the plant, the plant swallows it up, and there's no more carbon dioxide left. But then more carbon dioxide comes, and again the plant swallows it. The plant is swallowing carbon dioxide that the wind keeps blowing. "The world can't be without winds," the Gemara<sup>9</sup> says. Without winds we couldn't live. Did you ever thank Hashem for wind? Just once in your life, when you're walking in the street and a wind is blowing and you hold onto your hat, say with real thought, "*Baruch Hashem mashiv haru'ach*" — what a good thing wind is! If you do this once in your life, then in the next world you'll be able to say, "I said it once." It's not difficult — try saying it twice!

Without wind we'd have nothing to eat. The plants would die if the wind didn't keep bringing a new supply of carbon dioxide, constantly, like a conveyer belt. From the carbon dioxide the plant makes starch, and that starch becomes bread — bread is a miracle of *chessed*.<sup>10</sup>

When is the best time to think about this? Of course, we should think about it all week, but on Shabbos it's demanded of us that we think about it. That's why we eat even better bread on Shabbos — in order to emphasize the bread: bread with an exclamation point — *challah*. Taste that delicious bread and think where it comes from — it comes from the wind. Where does the wind come from? *Mashiv haru'ach* — Hashem makes the wind blow. The wind is a special mir-

---

8. *Avos* 6:4

9. *Taanis* 3b

10. See *Awake My Glory* p. 368 (1159), *Rejoice Of Youth* p. 100 (178)

acle, and its purpose is *mechalkel chayim bechessed* — to make sure that you have food.

### *The miracle of salt*

**S**ALT IS ANOTHER MIRACLE FOOD. EVERY CELL OF THE BODY NEEDS salt. People used to worry about not having enough salt. Nations used to go to war against one another because of salt. Salt — sodium chloride — is a miracle chemical. Sodium is a poisonous chemical; chlorine gas is a poisonous gas, but when they come together, they become life-giving, nutritious salt. Did you ever think about thanking Hashem for salt? But you couldn't live without salt! Animals sometimes travel great distances just to find rocks made of salt and to lick those rocks, because they need salt. Yet you may have spent your whole life not once having thought of thanking Hashem for salt. That's *chatas* — you're missing out on the purpose of living. Hashem gave us salt so that we can appreciate what He gave us.<sup>11</sup>

The Sages<sup>12</sup> tell us that one person who gives another a gift has to tell the other person about the gift, so that he should appreciate the gift and he should appreciate the giver. The Torah tells us that we must put salt on every *korban*. A Jewish table is like a *mizbei'ach*, and when a Jew eats it's like offering a *korban* to Hashem; and so he dips his challah in salt — but without giving it a moment's thought. He thinks he's doing Hakadosh Baruch Hu a favor, and the thought crosses his mind, "How frum I am!" He doesn't hear Hashem's Voice asking, "When will you thank Me for the salt?" So on Shabbos, in addition to thinking about the challah, think about the salt, too.

### *The miracle of water*

**A**ND THEN WE COME TO THE LITTLE BIT OF WATER. WATER IS ANOTHER *neis*, a great miracle. Without water a person will die. The atmosphere that surrounds us is full of the substances that make water — oxygen and hydrogen — but you can't drink them. Take the oxygen and hydrogen in the right proportions, put them in a little chamber and add an electric spark. That electric spark is the *shadchan* that brings together the unwilling *chassan* and *kallah*, which don't want to combine. The oxygen and hydrogen unite and there's water.

11. See *Sing You Righteous* p. 157 (351)

12. *Shabbos* 10b

If you take two gases, one filled with oxygen and one with hydrogen — neither of which can quench your thirst — and breathe all that you can, filling your lungs with them, you'll still be thirsty. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings them miraculously together and they become water — such an essential thing. Someone traveling in a desert without water, who sees a little spring, feels such a simchah. That water is better than anything in the world, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu asks, “Did you thank Me for the water?” You may mumble a berachah, but that's not thanking. Look at the glass in your hand and say “*tov me'od*,” even if you don't mean it. After saying it a few times, little by little you will internalize it. But if we fail to say it, we'll be judged for it — it's *chatas*; we're missing out.<sup>13</sup>

If a person utilizes Shabbos with a little thought, he begins to see the world as a good place. He begins to appreciate the glass of water. He gets into the habit of holding the glass of water in his hand and looking at it. How beautiful it is! If I had to buy water in the drugstore, I ought to pay \$100 for a little bottle — we can't get along without it. Someone in the Sahara Desert looking for a little bit of water before he drops dead will gladly pay \$1000 for it. We have to realize that every time we drink water we're being saved from extinction, and so we have to think of water as *happiness*.

When I was in Slabodka you couldn't drink the water. The water from the well always carried a danger of typhus, so you had to boil the water. People didn't bother boiling it, so there was no water to drink in the yeshivah — all day long not a drop of water to drink. There was a barrel that held water for washing your hands, but you couldn't drink that water. They hadn't washed out that barrel for fifty years! When you came home to your *shtanzia* and you wanted a drink, you had to ask the baalebuste to boil up some water for you; sometimes she did.

When I came back to America, I appreciated the water. Just open the faucet, and *mayim chayim*! What a blessing — water! And you can even drink it without boiling it.

If you don't recognize this blessing, it's *chatas* — you're missing out in life. Our purpose in life is to see how *chessed* Hashem *mal'ah ha'aretz* — Hashem's kindness fills the earth. This does not mean that someone who doesn't think these thoughts is not fulfilling his duty as a Jew. It is very good if he is *shomer Shabbos*, keeping all

---

13. See *Awake My Glory* p. 292 (941), *Rejoice O Youth* p. 312 (703)

the details of the mitzvos. But nevertheless, he is a failure; he hasn't lived properly. Don't allow yourself to be dragged along by the majority of people, because they have this fault of not thinking. "*Rachmana liba ba'ei*"<sup>14</sup> means He wants you thinking; He wants your *lev*, your thoughts. Shabbos is a day of berachah for that purpose: We should utilize the Shabbos to learn how to be happy in this world.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, it doesn't come all at once. Once you appreciate a glass of water, after having worked on it many times, then you start appreciating a piece of bread, by working on it. And your life is transformed: bread and water — you're a happy person!

### *Appreciating air*

**T**HEN START APPRECIATING THE AIR. AIR IS A SPECIAL MIXTURE — IT'S A cocktail when you breathe. If it were all oxygen, it would make you drunk; you would reel and you'd fall down dizzily. If it were all nitrogen, you wouldn't be able to survive for a minute. Nitrogen doesn't help you. Air is 20 percent oxygen and 80 percent nitrogen — those are exactly the right proportions for you. So it's made precisely to support life. No other location in the universe has air like we have here. Think about that; it's not an accident. It's a formula fit for us exactly. There's no air on Mars, no air on the moon, no air anywhere. Only this earth has air. Here the person has been breathing all his life, and did he ever once stop to say Baruch Hashem for air? It's a blind world.

"Well, everyone else is blind," you may say, "so I'll also remain blind." But that's why you came here. Open your eyes and get yourself a pair of Shabbos glasses, and through those glasses look at the world, and see the truth of Hashem's creation. "*Vayevarech*" — He blessed the Shabbos, in order that you should see how good it is to have air in the world.

Breathe deeply. Most people never fill their lungs completely. Fill your lungs all the way, until the bottom of your chest bulges out. And *think* the same way — most people think shallowly. The bottom of the brain is never used. Think deeply. Then you'll start enjoying the happiness of this world. Breathe deeply, and thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for this cocktail. It's *tov me'od!*

---

14. *Sanhedrin* 106a

15. See *Rejoice O Youth* p. 314 (706)

## ***Be careful in choosing your associates***

**I**F YOU TELL THIS TO A LETZ, A SCORNER, AND HE RESPONDS DEADPAN, he discourages you. “*Be’oznei kesil al tedaber*,”<sup>16</sup> *Mishlei* tells us, “Don’t talk in the ears of a fool, because he’ll make the wisdom of your words into nothing.” He’ll do this in two ways. First, he’s not excited about it, so your enthusiasm gets cooled off too (as the Torah tells us about Amalek, “...*asher koracho badarech*” — Amalek “cooled us off”). Second, he might tell you that you have to learn Torah. You have to keep the halachos of Shabbos; and that is all true. But you can do that and still be missing one of the most important parts of life, for Hakadosh Baruch Hu said we must recognize that the world is *tov me’od*.

*Sefer Tehillim* opens with the words “*Ashrei ha’ish*, happy is the man...*uvemoshav leitzim lo yashav* — who did not sit in the company of scorners. *Mishlei* is a *sefer* of advice, but *sefer Tehillim* is not; it’s a *sefer* of praises to Hashem. The first *kapittel* of *Tehillim*, though, is entirely different; it fits into *Mishlei*. It warns us to keep away from *leitzim*. Why does it begin that way?

The tone of *Tehillim* is one of praising Hashem. But David Hamelech starts out with a warning against associating with the wrong people, for the simple reason that in order to be something in this world you must keep yourself separate from the *leitzim*. It’s impossible to accomplish what you’re supposed to in this world if you’re going to think like others around you. And know that there are *leitzim* in the yeshivah and there are *leitzim* in the shul. Frum *leitzim* are also *leitzim*. Do’eg HaEdomi was a frum Jew, and so was Korach. This is why we are warned: Do not be influenced by your environment. You must have an independent mind and think only what the Torah wants you to think. We are in this world to gain a clear awareness of all the benefits Hashem is giving to us.

---

16. *Mishlei* 23:9