

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of Itta bas Yosef Mordechai ז"ל and Tzvi Daniel ben David ז"ל Ainsworth
Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

הקהל Hakhel

Spreading the Hakhel Message

The Sages teach: "On that day [of Hakhel], the Priests would stand at every vacant lot and toot golden trumpets. Regarding a Priest who was not clutching a trumpet, it was said, 'perhaps he isn't a Kohein'" (Tosefta, Sotah, 7:8).

We learn from this the importance of Hakhel awareness: Not only was it important for the priest to make the Jewish people aware of the Hakhel gathering, but this messaging was an essential task that was relevant to their priestly identity. To the extent that if a Priest did not have his trumpet "it was said, 'perhaps he isn't a Kohein.'"

This remains relevant even now, after the destruction of the Holy Temple. The tooting of the golden trumpets remains to be practiced on a spiritual plane, and without the "limitations" that were present in the physical Temple. Therefore, if in the physical Temple only Priests can serve, now every Jew can serve. (E.g., the practice of sacrifices and its spiritual counterpart of prayer, in the Temple only priests offered the sacrifices, Prayer, however, is said by all Jews.)

The physical trumpet has been replaced by raving about and spreading the Hakhel message, and the task falls not only on the priests, but on every Jew.

And like the blowing of the trumpets in the Temple was essential to the Priestly identity, the public awareness of Hakhel is so important that it is not merely a small part of a Jew's Divine service, but is central to their Jewish identity.

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סיפור חסידי

Once Upon a Chasid

By Yanki Tauber

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The Rebbe's New Clothes

All that walk on four... (Shemini 11:21)

When Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch was a child of seven, he asked his father Rabbi Menachem Mendel: Why does man walk upright, while animals walk on all fours? Rabbi Menachem Mendel replied: "This is a kindness from G-d to man: although man treads upon the material earth, he sees the sublime heaven. Not so those that crawl on four, who see only the mundane."

On Passover of 1943, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch related the following incident from his childhood years:

“For the Passover festival of 1890—I was several months short of my tenth birthday at the time—a new suit was made for me, together with a brand new pair of shoes.

“In Lubavitch, the preparations for the festival were conducted in a meticulous and thorough manner. On the day before Passover, a strict procedure was followed: first, all chametz¹ was searched out and eradicated from the yard, chicken coop, and stable. The attendant Reb Mendel was busy with this for a good part of the night before, and followed up with a double-check in the morning. Then, the chametz was burned, following which we would go immerse ourselves in the mikveh, dress for the festival, and bake the special matzos mitzvah² for the seder. Finally, there were always the last-minute preparations to be taken care of.

“Among these final odds and ends was a job entrusted to me: to remove the seals from the wine bottles (especially those with wording on them³) and to partially pull out the corks. The latter was a most challenging task, for one had to take care that the metal of the corkscrew should not come in contact with the wine.

“That year, I was busy at my appointed task in my father’s room. I went about my work with great caution, careful not to dirty my new suit and—most importantly—not to dull the shine on my sparkling new shoes.

“My father noticed what was uppermost in my mind and said to me: ‘Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi cites the following metaphor: A great nobleman sits at a table laden with all sorts of gourmet dishes and delicacies. Under the table lies a dog, gnawing a bone. Now, how seemly would it be, were the nobleman to climb down from his chair and join the dog under the table to chew on a luscious bone?!’

“My father’s words so affected me that I was ashamed to even look at my new clothes. This is education.”

1. Leavened substances.

2. The paschal lamb was offered in the Holy Temple on the afternoon before the beginning of the festival. Hence the custom of baking the matzoh to be eaten during the *seder* at this time.

3. To tear through a word is tantamount to ‘erasing,’ an act forbidden on the Shabbos or the festivals.

Choosing Humanity

G-d created this world and then placed human beings—created in His image—into it. In doing so He labeled the world as His, not unlike one who puts a sign bearing his name on the door of his house. But why did G-d choose corporeal humans as His “signposts” in the world? Wouldn’t the angels or pure divine light, have better suited the purpose of labeling the universe as His?

The answer is that, despite the superior beauty of the angels and the purity of the Divine light, G-d derives more pleasure from lowly humans. Because when a physical human, made from dust, contemplates the vastness of creation, trembles in awe of the Creator, and praises Him, this is entirely novel. That angels praise G-d is no surprise—but that even a lowly body can do so allows G-d to, figuratively, boast that His world is so impressive that mere dust recognizes its beauty.

This explains the Talmudic dictum (Taanis 31a): “A woman is only for her beauty.” The Zohar calls the physical body “a woman” and, indeed, our bodies were created only to accentuate the beauty of G-d’s world by demonstrating that even a derivative of dust can recognize G-d.

G-dliness In Plain and Obvious Sight

In the era of Moshiach, G-dliness will be revealed in this world, as it is stated, “*The glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh together will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken*” (Yeshayah 40:5). The words “*all flesh*” indicate that G-dliness will be seen with physical vision, and even sensed by the flesh. Indeed, even the animals will recognize their Creator and every created being will understand that it is a product of G-dliness. This will not be a miracle, superimposed on an otherwise un-G-dly world. Rather, it will become the natural state of physical creations to perceive G-dliness. It will be natural for the eye to see the glory of G-d!

This advanced state is represented by the number eight, which is one above the number seven that represents the natural order (as in the seven days of creation). At the same time, this revelation will become *shemini*, an “eighth,” a natural extension to the world as we now know it.

The Rebbe

לקוטי שיחות A Sicha

By: ProjectLikkuteiSichos.org
Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Prohibited Creatures

The Verse:

In the laws detailing the animals which are unfit for consumption, the Torah states:

“Any [creature] that goes on its belly, and any [creature] that walks on four [legs] to any [creature] that has many legs, among all creeping creatures that creep on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are an abomination” (Vayikra 11:42).

The Rashi:

Rashi identifies the creatures alluded to in the verse’s descriptions, and in its many uses of the term “any.”

That goes on its belly—This is the snake. The word גָּחֹן (gachon) denotes “bending low” [and it is used to describe the snake] because it moves while bent in a prostrated posture, prostrated on its belly.

Any [creature] that goes—[This comes] to include earthworms and that which resembles those that resemble them [i.e., that have tiny legs, but nevertheless slither like a worm on their bellies].

That walks on four—This refers to a scorpion.

Any [creature]—[This word comes] to include the beetle, called escarbot in French, and that which resembles those that resemble them.

Any [creature] that has many legs—This is the centipede, a creature with legs from its head to its tail, on either side, called centipede [in French].

The Questions:

- 1) The noun *gachon* first appears in the book of Bereishis, in the story of Adam, Chava, and the snake. Why does Rashi define the term here (“bending low because it moves while bent in a prostrated posture”) and not in Bereishis?
- 2) From the phrase “*Any creature that goes*” Rashi deduces that the verse is adding certain categories of creatures: “earthworms and that which resembles those that resemble them.” In effect, two categories are being added here. Earthworms (which are similar to snakes) and creatures that merely resemble earthworms.

Seemingly, however, the singular form of “any creature that goes...” should yield only one additional category, not two! In fact, the Talmud only adds the category of earthworm from the extra word “any.” Why, then, does Rashi read the addition as referring to two categories of creatures?

The Explanation:

The term *gachon* only ever refers to a snake, and the scorpion is the only creature that crawls on four legs. Therefore, the Torah could have simply said, “snake and scorpion.” From the fact that the Torah referred to these creatures with more generic terms Rashi deduces that the verse means to include a broader category of creatures—ones that resemble snakes in their characteristic of slithering on their bellies, and that resemble scorpions in their characteristic of walking on four legs.

If the verse would have said “all snakes” and “all scorpions” we would be able to include every species of snake and scorpion, but not other creatures which resemble snakes and scorpions in these unique characteristics. By saying “Any [creature] that goes on its belly, and any [creature] that walks on four [legs]” we know that any creature that is similar to snakes and scorpions in these aspects is included.

Just as in the first two phrases of the verse, a specific creature is intended, along with those similar

to it. So, too, in the third phrase: *Any [creature] that has many legs*. Although there are many creatures that fall under this description, Rashi understands that one species is intended, the centipede, which is an extreme example of a creature having many legs. The inclusive word *any* is then used to include other creatures with many legs as well.

The Lesson:

The snake represents the evil inclination. At first, it causes the person to “bend low,” eventually influencing him to “prostrate on its belly,” to be consumed with earthly concerns. The antidote to this is to “lift one’s eyes,” to Heaven and focus on spiritual goals.

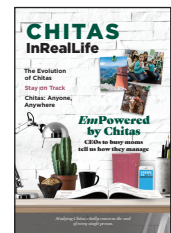
Through the power of Torah (represented by the letter *vav* of *gachon* which is the halfway point of the entire Torah), the evil inclination is refined and it ceases to be a force for evil, instead being transformed into a force for good.

Likkutei Sichos vol. 17. P. 117ff.

מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת Shabbos Chitas / Rambam Guide

Book	Section
Chumash – Rashi*	Shemini, 7th Aliyah
Tehillim*	Chapters 113 – 118
Tanya*	Likutei Amarim Chapter 42. עמ' נט - פרק מב. והנה... עד עמ' 118 - ידע וגו'.
Rambam – Sefer Hamitzvos*	Negative Mitzvah #168
Rambam – One Chapter*	Sefer Shoftim – Hilchos Melachim, Chapter 5
Rambam – Three Chapters**	Sefer Shoftim – Hilchos Avel Chapters 3 – 5

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