



“For the person being purified he shall take two live, pure birds”

The Slaughtered Bird Teaches Us Humility whereas the Live Bird Teaches Us about the Greatness of the Creator

On this auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, we will read the double parsha of Sazria-Metzora, following the usual procedure for a non-leap year. Similarly, we combine the parshiyos of Vayakheil-Pekudei, Acharei Mos-Kedoshim and Behar-Bechukosai in non-leap years. On the other hand, in a leap year, when we have a second month of Adar, we separate these parshiyos and read them on separate Shabbasos. The Gemara explains the rationale for this procedure (Megillah 31b):

תניא רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר, עזרא תיקן להן לישראל, שיהו קורין קללות שבתורת כהנים קודם עצרת, ושבמשנה תורה קודם ראש השנה. מאי טעמא, אמר אביי ואיתימא ריש לקיש, כדי שתכלה השנה וקללותיה. ומקשה בגמרא: “בשלמא שבמשנה תורה איכא כדי שתכלה שנה וקללותיה”, אלא שבתורת כהנים אטו עצרת ראש השנה היא, ומתריך: “אין עצרת נמי ראש השנה היא, דתנן ובעצרת על פירות האילן”.

It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Ezra decreed that Yisrael should read the curses found in sefer Vayikra (Bechukosai) prior to Shavuos and those in sefer Devarim (Ki Savo) prior to Rosh HaShanah. For what reason? Abayei said, while some say that Reish Lakish said it: So that the year may end along with its curses. Then, the Gemara asks: The concept of **“let the year end along with its curses”** is understood regarding the institution of reading the curses in sefer Devarim prior to Rosh HaShanah, but what is the relevance of this concept to the festival of Shavuos? **Is Shavuos the beginning of a new year?** The Gemara answers: **Indeed, Shavuos is also a type of New Year . . . with respect to the fruits of the trees.**

Tosafos (ibid.) explain that we always insert parshas Bamidbar between parshas Bechukosai and Chag HaShavuos,

and we always insert parshas Nitzavim between parshas Ki Tavo and Rosh HaShanah to create a separation between each set of curses and the respective New Year. So, on the one hand, we want to read the curses of the “tochachah” in parshas Bechukosai as close as possible to Chag HaShavuos—so that the previous year and its related curses will end prior to Shavuos. Yet, on the other hand, we read parshas Bamidbar immediately before Shavuos in order to create a separation between the “tochachah” in parshas Bechukosai and Shavuos.

It is precisely for this reason that we combine the parshiyos listed above in non-leap years. For, by doing so, we are able to read parshas Bamidbar prior to Chag HaShavuos—thereby creating the desired separation between the previous year’s curses and the anticipated New Year. In a leap year, however, due to the second month of Adar, we gain four more Shabbasos. Therefore, it is necessary to separate these parshiyos, so that parshas Bamidbar will intervene between the “tochachah” and Shavuos.

Furthermore, the combination of these parshiyos is logical seeing as the combined parshiyos all share common themes. For instance, both parshas Vayakheil and parshas Pekudei discuss matters pertaining to the building of the Mishkan and its vessels. Similarly, both parshas Sazria and parshas Metzora discuss the laws of lesions and afflictions.

Additionally, it is worth noting that our Rabbis had another valid reason for combining the readings of Sazria and Metzora. Whereas parshas Sazria details the lesions and afflictions that a person is subjected to as punishments; parshas Metzora, on the other hand, details the korban that the “metzora” must bring

on the day of his purification. Thus, both the punishment of the “metzora” and his tikun on the day of his purification are read together on the very same Shabbas Kodesh.

The Amazing Connection between Sazria-Metzora and Chag HaShavuos — the Festival Celebrating Matan Torah

Hence, it is only fitting that we explore the incredible lesson to be learnt from the tikun afforded the “metzora” on the day of his purification from his afflictions. The Torah teaches us that he is commanded to bring two pure, live birds. One bird is slaughtered and the other is left alive to be sent out over the field. Here are the pertinent pesukim in parshas Metzora (SheMos 14, 1): **“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, זאת תהיה תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן, ויצא הכהן אל מחוץ למחנה וראה הכהן והנה גרפא נגע הצרעת מן הצרוע, וצוה הכהן ולקח למיטהר שתי ציפורים חיות טהרות ועץ ארז ושני תולעת ואזוב. וצוה הכהן ושחט את הציפור האחת אל כלי חרש על מים חיים, את הציפור החיה יקח אותה ואת עץ הארז ואת שני התולעת ואת האזוב, וטבל אותם ואת הציפור החיה בדם הציפור השחטה על המים החיים, והזה על המיטהר מן הצרעת שבע פעמים וטיהרו ושלח את הציפור החיה על .”** **This shall be the law of the “metzora” on the day of his purification; he shall be brought to the kohen. The kohen shall go forth to the outside of the camp; the kohen shall look, and behold!—the “tzara’as” lesion had been healed from the “metzora.” The kohen shall command; and for the person being purified there shall be taken two live, pure birds, cedar-wood, and a crimson tongue of wool, and hyssop. The kohen shall command; and the one bird shall be slaughtered into an earthenware vessel over spring water. The live bird, he shall take it and the cedar-wood and the crimson wool and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the live bird into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the spring water. Then he shall sprinkle seven times upon the person being purified from the “tzara’as”; he shall purify him, and he shall set the live bird free upon the open field.**

Rashi comments: **Since afflictions come about due to “lashon hara,” which is an act of verbal twittering; therefore, his purification required birds that twitter incessantly with a chirping sound.** The commentaries ask an obvious question. We learned from Rashi that as part of his purification process, the “metzora” must bring a korban consisting of two birds that chirp incessantly to atone for the excessive “lashon hara” that came out of his mouth. That being

the case, we would have expected HKB”H to instruct him to slaughter both birds. So, why, indeed, does he only slaughter one and he sets the other one free to fly over the field?

HKB”H Only Bequeaths “Chochmah” to One Who Possesses “Chochmah”

I had a wonderful inspiration regarding this subject. To begin with, let us examine the sacred avodah that we are obliged to perform during the days of “Sefiras HaOmer.” As we know, these days prepare us to receive the Torah on Chag HaShavuos, which approaches auspiciously. We have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 55a):

“אמר רבי יוחנן, אין הקב”ה נותן חכמה אלא למי שיש בו חכמה, שנאמר יהב חכמתא לחכימין ומנדעא ליודעי בינה. שמע רב תחליפא בר מערבא ואמרה קמיה דרבי אבהו, אמר ליה אתון מזהתם מותניתו לה, אנן מהכא מתנינן לה דכתיב ובלב כל חכם לב נתתי חכמה.”

Rabbi Yochanan said: HKB”H only bestows chochmah upon one who possesses chochmah, as it states (Daniel 2, 21): “He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know how to reason.” Rav Tachalifa bar Maarava heard this statement and repeated it to Rabbi Abahu. He said to him: You learn it from there, but we learn it from here; for it is written (SheMos 31, 6): “In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted, I have placed chochmah.”

From this passage, it is apparent that the daunting task required of us in preparation for receiving the Torah is to strive to be a **“chacham.”** For, in the merit of accomplishing this feat, HKB”H will confer upon us the chochmah of the Torah, as it states: **“He gives wisdom to the wise.”**

Now, however, we must endeavor to reconcile the enigma which the commentaries have struggled to unravel. The language of the passuk: **“יהב חכמתא לחכימין”**—indicates that it is incumbent upon a person to acquire the first chochmah. In that merit, HKB”H will confer upon him His chochmah. Hence, we must discover what this first chochmah is that a person must acquire on his own in order to be endowed subsequently with HKB”H’s chochmah.

חכמה”ה Is Humility

We find a wonderful explanation in the Arugos HaBosem (Tetzaveh) referring to what we have learned in the Gemara

“למה נמשלו דברי תורה למים, דכתיב (ישעיה נה-א) הוי כל (Ta’anis 7a): צמא לכו למים, לומר לך מה מים מניחין מקום גבוה והולכין למקום נמוך, אף Why are words of Torah compared to water? . . . To teach us that just as water flows from higher ground to lower ground, so, too, words of Torah are only retained by someone who possesses a lowly self-image (humility). Elsewhere, the Gemara teaches us (Sotah 5a): “לעולם ילמד אדם מדעת קונו, שהרי הקב”ה הניח כל הרים: A person should always learn from the “da’as” of his Maker; for HKB”H passed over the taller mountains and hills and rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai. Similarly, the Gemara teaches us (Pesachim 66b): “כל Anyone who becomes haughty, if he is a wise man, his wisdom abandons him.

To emphasize this point, the Arugos HaBosem presents an idea brought down in many of our sacred sources. The designation חכמ”ה is composed of the letters כ”ח מ”ה—alluding to the attribute of humility (“anavah”). The words כ”ח מ”ה can be interpreted literally as: the power or state of insignificance. Due to his own extreme humility, Moshe Rabeinu says of himself (SheMos 16, 7): “ונחנו מה”—for what are we—suggesting that he considered himself insignificant. It should be noted that the source for this idea comes from the teachings of the great Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy”a, in Zera Kodesh (Chukas): “לחשוב תמיד, לחשב מ”ה, - חשב מ”ה, - לחשוב תמיד. וזה מורה אותיות מחשב”ה - חשב מ”ה, - לחשוב תמיד. ועל דרך זה חכמ”ה - כח מ”ה. בשפלותו, על דרך ונחנו מה, ועל דרך זה חכמ”ה - כח מ”ה. מחשב”ה—meaning thought—is an anagram for חשב מ”ה—indicating that a person should always think of himself as חכמ”ה, insignificant. This is the thrust of Moshe’s declaration: “ונחנו מה”. Similarly, the word חכמ”ה—meaning wisdom—can be reconfigured as כ”ח מ”ה.

The brilliant author of the Ben Ish Chai writes in his commentary on the aggadic passages of the Talmud, the Ben Yehoyada (Shabbas 89a): “כי ידוע שהתורה נקראת חכמ”ה שהיא כח מ”ה, לרמוז מי שיש לו ענוה אמיתית שהיא במדרגת מ”ה, זה ראוי שתקרא חכמ”ה—it is known that the Torah is referred to as חכמ”ה, which is כח מ”ה; this indicates that a person who possesses true humility, the status of “מ”ה, is worthy of having the Torah associated with him. In his commentary Benayahu (Pesachim 66a), he applies this concept to interpret the Gemara’s statement cited above (ibid.): “כל המתיהר אפ”י חכם הוא חכמתו מסתלקת ממנו. As we have learned, the designation of חכמ”ה conveys the notion of כח מ”ה; wisdom is associated with the recognition of one’s insignificance. Therefore, someone

who is haughty, who lacks the wisdom and quality of חכמ”ה—humility—his chochmah abandons him.

It is worth adding that even according to the simple, straightforward understanding of “חכמה”, we find a wonderful association between “חכמה” and humility. For, we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 4, 1): “איזהו חכם הלומד מכל אדם”—Who is wise? One who learns from all people. Thus, we have an explicit reference regarding the meaning and implication of the term chochmah. Chochmah reflects the fact that man recognizes that he is far away from achieving the goal of chochmah. Therefore, he is ready and willing to learn from everyone. This ties in very nicely with the allusion inherent in the word חכמ”ה - כח מ”ה. In other words, he recognizes his own lowliness and inadequacy—his state of חכמ”ה—and, as a result, is willing to learn from all people.

Now, let us revisit the words of wisdom of the Arugos HaBosem. He explains accordingly the significance of the passuk: “יהב חכמתא לחכימין”—He gives wisdom to the wise. Initially, a Jew must labor and strive to achieve the first חכמ”ה; he must adopt the attribute of humility—embodying the ideal of כח מ”ה. As a reward, HKB”H will imbue him with the chochmah of the Torah, which, like water, seeks the low ground. It was for this reason that HKB”H chose to give us the Torah on Har Sinai rather than on one of the taller, more majestic mountains; he wanted to impress upon us the importance and majesty of humility. This is the gist of his beautiful explanation.

Every Person Must Serve Hashem with the Two Aspects of חכמ”ה

Notwithstanding, according to the insight of the Arugos HaBosem, Rabbi Yochanan’s statement requires further clarification: “HKB”H only bestows chochmah upon one who possesses chochmah, as it states (Daniel 2, 21): ‘He gives wisdom to the wise . . .’ After all, his concept of chochmah only applies to mankind. In the merit of embracing the attribute of “anavah” (humility)-- the essential wisdom of חכמ”ה -- HKB”H bestows upon a person His wisdom. This concept of chochmah clearly does not apply to HKB”H. He is perfect and omniscient; the state of חכמ”ה is incongruous with HKB”H. What then is the chochmah of HKB”H that He bestows upon a person?

It appears that we can explain the matter based on what the Tzemach Tzedek (Lech Lecha), authored by the esteemed Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz, zy”a, brings down in the name of his elder, the esteemed Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kosov, zy”a, the author of Ahavat Shalom. He writes that every Jew must always personify two aspects of מ”ה. The first מ”ה alludes to one’s sense of personal lowliness (Tehillim 8, 2): “מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו” -- **what is man that You should remember him, and the son of a mere mortal that You should be mindful of him?** The second מ”ה alludes to one’s appreciation of the greatness of the Creator (ibid. 5): “מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ” -- **Hashem, our Lord, how grand is Your name in all the earth.**

Based on this idea, he proceeds to interpret the following elucidation in the Gemara (Pesachim 68b): “כתוב אחד אומר (בשביעי של בסח) עצרת לה’ אלקיך, וכתוב אחד אומר (בשמיני עצרת במדבר) one passuk states (Devarim 16, 8): “**It is an ‘atzeret’ for Hashem, your G-d**”; while another passuk states: “**It shall be an ‘atzeret’ for you.**” . . . Therefore, divide it up—half for Hashem and half for you. The word לך (90)—meaning “for you”—equals two times מ”ה (45). Thus, it is incumbent upon a person to divide the לך into two components: (1) “חציו לה”—one half of מ”ה equaling מ”ה, recognizing the greatness of Hashem, the Creator: “מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ” and (2) “וחציו לכם” -- one half of מ”ה equaling מ”ה, recognizing one’s own lowliness and insignificance: “מה אנוש כי תזכרנו”. This concludes his tremendous insight.

Now, in Likutei Imrei Yosef (end of Lech Lecha), he writes that he heard in the name of the Tzemach Tzaddik that he added a wonderful allusion of his own to the words of his elder, regarding a passuk related to “yetziat Mitzrayim” (SheMos 12, 39): “ולא יכלו להתמהמה”—**for they could not delay.** Seeing as Yisrael in Mitzrayim had sunk to the forty-ninth level of tumah, they could not appreciate the greatness of the Creator or their own lowliness. This is alluded to by the word “להתמהמה”, which contains the word מ”ה twice. Thus, the passuk can be interpreted as stating that they could not appreciate the two aspects of מ”ה explained above: (1) “מה אדיר שמך” and (2) “מה אנוש כי תזכרנו”.

This then is the message conveyed by Rabbi Yochanan: “**HKB”H only bestows chochmah upon one who possesses chochmah, as it states (Daniel 2, 21): ‘He gives wisdom**

to the wise . . .” If a person wisely adopts the personal characteristic of “anavah” – the attitude of מ”ה, the first **chochmah** – recognizing his own lowliness and inadequacy, reflecting the מ”ה of: “מה אנוש כי תזכרנו”; then HKB”H reveals to him the **chochmah** of the Torah, which is also an expression of מ”ה. For, through Torah-study and wisdom, a person achieves an appreciation of the greatness of the Creator, the second מ”ה, reflecting the notion of: “מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ”.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the teaching in the Mishnah (Avos 2, 1): “דע מה למעלה ממוך עין רואה: -- **Know what is above you: A seeing eye, a hearing ear and all of your deeds being recorded in the book.** The holy sefarim Toldot Yaakov Yosef (Vayikra), the Kedushat Levi (Metzora) and the Nefesh HaChaim (Chapter 4), all provide the following interpretation: “דע מה למעלה”—know that everything that transpires above (in the heavenly realms) is determined by your actions; it is all “ממך”—from you. Your actions and deeds down below determine what is decreed above.

Based on what we have learned, we can propose that the Tanna intends to teach us the following: “דע מה למעלה ממוך”—know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if you wish to access the aspect of מ”ה from above—namely, the revelation of the Torah’s chochmah from HKB”H, as reflected by the passuk: “מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ”—it all depends on you, “ממך”. You must first behave in a manner consistent with the quality of מ”ה, namely humility, as reflected by the passuk: “מה אנוש כי תזכרנו”. As a consequence, you will inspire HKB”H to act above in a similar manner, displaying the quality of מ”ה—to reveal to you the wisdom of the Torah exemplifying the greatness of the Creator: “מה אדיר שמך”.

During the Sefirah One Must Acquire the Midah of Anavah—the Power of מ”ה

Continuing onward on this enlightening path, we will proceed to explain the avodah that is incumbent upon us during the days and weeks of the “sefirah,” in anticipation of receiving the Torah. We have learned that when Yisrael left the tumah of Mitzrayim: “לא יכלו להתמהמה”—they were incapable of achieving and appreciating the two aspects of מ”ה. Firstly, they could not comprehend their own lowliness and inadequacy, the מ”ה of: “מה אנוש כי תזכרנו”. Consequently, they could not comprehend the greatness of the Creator, the

second מ"ה "מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ": because they were not worthy of receiving the Torah, the **chochmah** of HKB"H. For, as the Gemara teaches us, HKB"H only bestows **chochmah** upon a person who has acquired the first **chochmah** – the midah of "anavah," reflecting the concept of כח מ"ה—the **power of מ"ה**.

Therefore, HKB"H provided them with the cure prior to the malady. He gave them the seven weeks of the "sefirah," during which they could refine the seven midot through the midah of "anavah." Thus, they would comprehend just how far they actually were from refining and improving their midot. Along these lines, the Avodat Yisrael (Likutim, Tehillim 42) writes that the avodah during the period of the "sefirah" is to achieve a sense of modesty and humility in preparation for receiving the Torah.

He then points out an allusion in the passuk (Tehillim 42, 5): "כי אעבור בסך אדם עד בית אלקים". The words "כי אעבור בסך" allude to a Jew who passes through ("עובר") the total sum ("סך") of the days of the "sefirah," which number "עד בית – 49; אדם" – "אלקים" – until he reaches the anticipated day of Matan Torah. The primary avodah during these 49 days is to resemble a nursing infant, who is totally dependent on his Mosher for nutrition and sustenance. This is alluded to by the term "אדם" which is an anagram for "ד"ד"א" – a Mosher's breast. In similar fashion, a Jew must recognize that he has nothing other than what he receives from HKB"H. In the merit of this recognition, he will receive the Torah on Chag HaShavuot.

The holy master, the Maharid of Belz, zy"a, addressed the Midrash's (V.R. 28, 3) elucidation of the passuk related to the counting of the Omer (Vayikra 23, 15): "שבע שבתות תמימות תהיינה": **"They shall be seven complete weeks": When are they considered complete? When Yisrael are acting in accordance with the will of the Omnipresent.** In other words, the purpose of the seven weeks of the "sefirah" is for the people of Yisrael to recognize their lowliness and inadequacies. As we learned in the Gemara cited above (Sotah 5a): **"A person should always learn from the "da'as" of his Maker; for HKB"H passed over the taller mountains and hills and rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai, the lowest of the mountains."** We see that it is G-d's will that a person carry himself with humility. This completes his sacred words.

Based on what we have discussed, it is evident that the goal and purpose of the seven weeks of the "sefirah" are for every individual Jew to acquire the initial **chochmah**, the character trait of lowliness, the **power of מ"ה--מ"ה**. A Jew must appreciate that with regards to his deeds, he is insignificant: "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו". Thus, on Shavuot, he will merit receiving the **chochmah** of HKB"H; with that כח מ"ה he will better appreciate the greatness of the Creator, in the sense of: "מה" אדיר שמך בכל הארץ". In this manner, the tikun for not being able להתמהמ"ה – to achieve the two aspects of מ"ה – in Mitzrayim, will be completed.

The Maggid of Mezritsch Settles the Dispute between Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha

Following this sublime, majestic path, we can now explain why HKB"H commanded the "metzora" to bring two birds. In the sefer Teshuot Chen, authored by the esteemed Rabbi Gedaliah of Linitz, ztz"l, he presents reliable, firsthand testimony regarding a dispute between his Rav, Rabbi Zusha, zy"a, and his brother, Rabbi Elimelech, zy"a. He heard from his Rav that he once argued with his brother as to which is preferable—first recognizing one's lowliness and inadequacy and thereby perceiving the greatness of the Creator, or first recognizing the greatness of the Creator and thereby perceiving one's lowliness. Here is what he writes:

"שמעתי מפה קדוש המנוח הרב מוה"ר זושא מאניפאלי, שפעם אחת היה מתווכח עם אחיו המפורסם מוה"ר אלימלך, שאחד מהם אמר שהעיקרא הוא שיהיה האדם מקודם שפל רוח לתכליתו, עד שמגודל השפלות יבוא אחר כך להבין גדלות הבורא יתברך, ואחד מהם אמר בהיפוך, שישתכל מקודם בגדלות הבורא ברוך הוא, ומצד זה יבוא אחר כך להכרת שפלות עצמו על נכון. ושאלו את הרב המגיד רבינו הקדוש מו"ה דוב בער זצוק"ל, שיכריע ביניהם עם מי האמת, וצדקו יחדיו דברי שניהם בעיניו, ואמר שאלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים הם, אך מדריגה זו חשוב מקודם שפלות עצמו היא מדריגה הגדולה מחברתה".

He writes that the holy Maggid, Rav Dov Ber, ztz"l, was asked to decide which of the brothers was correct. The Maggid said that in his opinion both viewpoints are correct and divinely inspired; however, recognizing one's lowliness is a higher level of perception.

Based on our current discussion, we can suggest an explanation for the Maggid's determination. By first recognizing one's lowliness and adopting an attitude of "anavah": "יהיב חכמתא לחכימין"-- a person merits receiving the

heavenly **chochmah** of developing a true appreciation of the greatness of the Creator—the **מ"ה** of **כח מ"ה** of **מה אדיר שמך**—“מה אדיר שמך”.

This now enlightens us with regards to HKB”H’s command for the “metzora” to bring two live, pure birds on the day of his purification. One bird is slaughtered, while the second is left alive. In Rashi’s commentary, he explains the rationale for instructing the “metzora” to bring cedar-wood, a crimson tongue of wool and hyssop along with the two birds. Regarding the cedar-wood, he comments: **“Because afflictions come about due to haughtiness.”** Regarding the crimson tongue of wool and the hyssop, he comments: **“What should he do to make amends and be cured? He should lower himself from his arrogance like a worm and like a hyssop.”**

We learn that until he was cured of his “tzara’as,” he was still infected with the klipah of haughtiness. In that state, he was not worthy of engaging in Torah-study. For, as we have learned, HKB”H only bestows **chochmah** on someone who has attained the **chochmah** of **מ"ה--כח מ"ה**--humility, the opposite of haughtiness. This prompts the Midrash to explain (V.R. 16, 4): **“זאת תהיה תורת המצורע, הדא הוא דכתיב ולרשע אמר אלקים מה לך לספר”** “**זאת תהיה תורת המצורע, הדא הוא דכתיב ולרשע אמר אלקים מה לך לספר**.” Regarding the status of the “metzora,” the Midrash cites the passuk (Tehillim 50, 16): **“To the ‘rasha’ G-d said: What is the point of your recounting My statutes and bearing My covenant upon your lips?”** In other words, so long as the “metzora” has not been cured of the affliction of haughtiness, he is still considered a “rasha”; as such, HKB”H is not interested in his words of Torah. Only after he has been rid of his “ga’avah” on the day of his purification does HKB”H desire his Torah: **“זאת תהיה תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו”**.

Therefore, HKB”H commands him to bring two birds for his purification process. First, he slaughters one bird to remind himself of his lowliness and insignificance. By recognizing that every human being is destined to die, he recalls the teaching of the Mishnah (Avos 6, 10):

“שבשעת פטירתו של אדם אין מלוין לו לאדם, לא כסף ולא זהב, ולא אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה ומעשים טובים בלבד, שנאמר בהתהלךך תנחה אותך, בשכבך תשמור עליך, והקיצות היא תשיחך, בהתהלךך תנחה אותך בעולם הזה, בשכבך תשמור עליך בקבר, והקיצות היא תשיחך לעולם הבא.”

When a man departs from this world, neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones nor pearls escort him, but only Torah-study and good deeds, as it is said (Mishlei 6, 22): “As you go forth, it will guide you; as you recline, it will protect you; and when you awake, it will speak on your behalf.” “As you go forth, it will guide you” refers to Olam HaZeh; “as you recline, it will protect you” refers to the grave; “and when you wake, it will speak on your behalf” refers to Olam HaBa.

In contrast, the live bird that is set free over the field spreads its wings to soar without restrictions in the skies above. It reminds the “metzora” that he contaminated his mind with haughty thoughts and self-pride. With this new awareness, he will recognize his true insignificance causing him to appreciate and contemplate the magnificence of the Creator. In the words of the Navi (Yeshayah 40, 26): **“שאו מרום-- עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה”** **“שאו מרום-- עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה”** **Who created these.**

It should be evident that all of this relates magnificently to the service of Hashem that we are obliged to perform during the days and weeks of the “sefirah”—the period of preparation for receiving the Torah. After every one of us has experienced his own personal exodus from the galus in Mitzrayim, it is unconscionable for us to remain in a state of: **“ולא יכלו”** **“ולא יכלו”**. We must contemplate and adopt the two aspects of **מ"ה**: (1) our personal lowliness and insignificance, the **מ"ה** of **“מה אנוש כי תזכרנו”** and (2) the greatness and supremacy of the Creator, the **מ"ה** of **“מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ”**. In this merit, we will be worthy to receive the Torah on Chag HaShavuos, which approaches auspiciously!

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