

Lag Ba'omer Shiur

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1. *Rashbi's hilulah and knowing how to give thanks*

Today is the *hilulah* (day of passing) of *Rashbi*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. In *Sefirat Ha'omer* it is the day of *hod* of *hod*. In the *Alef Beit* poster we made for the children, *hod* appears in the context of saying thanks, as an acronym of the letter *dalet*, whose phrase there is "Know to give thanks" (דע לימר תודה). If *hod* is giving thanks, then what is the *hod* of *hod*? It means that I thank You God, for giving me *da'at*, and you gave me the *da'at* to know that I should give thanks.

What is the essential connection between *Rashbi* and *hod* of *hod*? In the *Zohar*, *Rashbi* and his disciples are 10 in number and thus they correspond to the 10 *sefirot*. *Rashbi* himself corresponds to *da'at* and his students to the rest of the *sefirot*. So this is the connection: that the main revelation of having *da'at*, of knowing, of having human consciousness, is to know that one must give thanks. In *Sefirat Ha'omer* there are no days that correspond to *da'at*, so the closest thing is how *da'at* appears here in the *hod* of *hod*. He teaches us that איהי בהוד, she is in *hod*, that God gives us the knowledge to know how to give thanks.

Obviously *Chanan* (the Lubavitcher emissary who just returned from India with his family today) is giving thanks for all that he had. *Chabad* is *chochmah binah* and *da'at* and the *ikar*, the main thing is *da'at* (corresponding to the *sefirah* of *chochmah* in the *Zohar* is *Rashbi's* son, Rabbi Elazar), but *Rashbi* himself is *da'at*.

Hakarat hatov

In the books of *musar* *hod* of *hod* is known as הכרת הטוב, recognizing goodness (that was done to me). Sometimes it is called, "recognizing loving-kindness" (הכרת ההסד). In the *Tanach*, sometimes when someone did something good for someone else it's called *chesed*. In the soul, *chesed* is the first of the emotive *sefirot*, and it is also the first of the 5 extremities and *hod* is the last. So *hod* of *hod* is the end of the *chesed*, and it is the light that returns from the first day of the *sefirah*. Up to this point in *Sefirat Ha'omer*, these were all particular rectifications, and now they are all inclusive days.

Da'at is known as the key that includes 6. *Hod* of *hod* is the day on which we receive *da'at*. So once again we are explaining that the essence of *da'at* is knowing how to say thanks. The higher the thing you are giving thanks for is, relative to your understanding, the more *da'at* it requires. To understand that there is something that is infinitely higher than your mind requires a lot of *da'at*. First of all a person should give thanks to God for what He is doing for him, and then give thanks to all those around him who are giving him goodness. The *Chovat Halevavot*, the duties of the heart was a very important book in the eyes of the BST and for this reason the Rebbe wanted people to learn this book in rectifying their character. And there he begins with the fact that a person should first of

all give thanks to people, because if he does not get used to recognizing the goodness that has been done for him, he automatically is *kofer* in the good done to him by God.

Recognizing the community

There is a question today about how one gives thanks to the community. Giving thanks to an individual, to God, that is understandable. But, what about the establishment, which in very particular cases, might have done something good for you. Most of the goodness that *Hashem* does for us we do not recognize at all, which is why we need so much *da'at* to recognize it (it should go to the level of recognizing the goodness in every breath that we take). The sages say that you should pray for the peace of the establishment, the *malchut*, because if it doesn't exist, there will be anarchy. And, who wants anarchy? No one here wants anarchy! And above that, there are all kinds of good things that we get because there is an establishment. So if someone has reached *da'at*, he should be able to recognize the goodness that they bring about. Even the very fact that they let me come into *Eretz Yisrael*. Are you angry at them because it was difficult? Or do you thank them for finally letting you in. Of course all of this is connected to "reasons," as in Rebbe Usher's understanding.

Beneficence of evil communities

For this reason, in the honor of *Rashbi*, we wanted to talk about the *midah* of recognizing goodness that is done for us, הברת הטוב. *Rashbi's* whole story begins with the fact that he condemned the Romans for the good of their establishment, saying that all the good that they do, they do for themselves, for their own purpose and it is not good at all. On the other hand, his colleague, Rabbi Yehuda who was also a *tzadik yesod olam*,

When *Rashbi* came out he still burnt the world, this time the Jewish world (he burnt the "state"). So he had to go back for another year into the cave, and when he came out he came to the realization that there is a difference between Jews and non-Jews. By Jews, even the animal soul is different, it contains the good of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. Especially in the time of the *Tann'aim* where a Jew who left the fold was considered worse than a non-Jew. So this is our topic for today. Clearly, this whole topic is related specifically to *Rashbi* and knowing how to look at reality the right way, and not just get angry at what is lacking. This applies specifically to our own group of students and is necessary in order to advance our causes in the world.

The Maharit

The source of what we will say is based on the *derashot* of the *Maharit*, Rabbi Yosef of Tirani, the son of the *Mabit*, Rabbi Moshe of Tirani. Apart from his many Responsa there are *derashot* in the order of the Torah. This today comes from the second *derush* for *parashat Shoftim*. There we find the Torah discussing the three crowns: King, Priests, and Judges. We mentioned this in the book "Three Crowns," that this is the *parshah* that has the three crown in the highest density. יסף מטרנאני = שמעון, in honor of *Rashbi*. Also a connection between Shimon and Yosef.

Rashbi's most famous saying

He starts with perhaps *Rashbi's* most famous *mishnah*: "Rabbi Shimon says there are 3 crowns, priesthood, Torah and kingship, and above them all is the crown of a good name." Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Akiva have two extremes, Rabbi Meir, that in any case you are called children to God and Rabbi Akiva says, the greatest principle in the Torah is love your neighbor as yourself. This is *Rashbi's* most important saying. Normally, we think that crowns are inherited, so the priesthood is passed down through the offspring of Aharon and the crown of Torah through *Moshe Rabbeinu* and finally the crown of kingdom, through King David. But, since the crown of Torah is put aside and anyone can come and claim it, by wearing it you become the continuation of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. *Keter Shem Tov* is the same. Whoever claims it becomes connected with the one who truly wears the crown of *shem tov* openly, the Mashiach. In the *Shlah* printed in the year גהח, the year of the BST's birth, the opening page has a picture of the three crowns with a baby wearing a fourth, in honor of the BST's birth. In any case, this is *Rashbi's* most central saying.

The crown of good name

The *Maharit* then proceeds to explain this saying in many different ways. He is revealed to be a tremendous scholar of Talmud, as the Chida wrote about him in *Shem Hagedolim*. He mentions that the three crowns correspond to the three laurels in the *mishkan*, and he explains that the fourth crown, the *keter shem tov*, is the *mishkan* itself, the tent covering itself. He adds that everything had to be anointed in order to receive the holiness that hovered above them, including their laurels. In spirituality there is the *mishkan*, the highest crown above, then there is the anointing oil, שמן משחת קדש, and he even writes that the vessels have to be anointed only when they are in the *mishkan*, not when they are outside, because it says, ומשחת אותו ואת כל אשר בו, when it is inside. Indeed in Ecclesiastes it says, טוב שמן משמן טוב, thus the fourth crown is the good oil. So now the reason that the fourth crown of good name is higher is because each of the other crowns without this one, is not considered good at all. To be a genius in Torah without the fourth crown is nothing. He brings Rashi who says, what does the crown of Torah literally refer to? The literal meaning is that the Torah is commanding us to respect the person who has merited this thing, the Torah. About the Torah it says, והדרת פני זקן, you should respect the elder, the elder referring to someone who knows Torah. About the priesthood there is a commandment to respect the priest too. The same with the King, שום תשים עליך מלך, you should have awe from the king. But, he says, we have never found a commandment to respect someone who has a good name. This is another proof that it is not something in and of itself.

We could say that the fourth crown is the Oral Torah or the *pnimiyus* of Torah and this is what connects with the other 3 crowns. Indeed to a person like this we should have הכרת הטוב. The first half of the *derush* is about the three crowns and the second half is about הכרת הטוב. So there is a parallel to the idea that *Rashbi* (who speaks of the 4 crowns) represents the topic of recognizing goodness when it has been done to us. Indeed, *Rashbi* himself is the example of the person that has the fourth crown. It begins with the

person himself knowing and recognizing and giving thanks for the goodness that has been done with him. And thanks to his recognition and his giving thanks, everyone loves him, because he gives thanks to everyone. Everyone is doing me a favor, even if I'm not conscious of it, and therefore I give thanks to everyone, that is real *bitul*, knowing that I did not do any of this. According to *musar* this is not to ignore the goodness that others have done with me and because of this I come to recognize the goodness that *Hashem* has done with me.

What does rectifying ourselves begin with?

In many things we say that we have to begin our rectification from our relationship with other people before coming to rectify our relationship with God. In the *Yom Yom*, the Rebbe quotes that the Alter Rebbe was asked what to begin with, and he replied that begin with the love of the Jewish people, because by doing so, you are loving what God Himself loves. Even though a Jew has a *chush* in *Ahavat Yisrael* and when you have a *chush* in something, you don't need to get it from something else. You just simply have it. But, even someone who has a *chush* in something has to work on himself. Like Abraham, that even though he had a *chush* in doing kindness with others, he had to work on himself in order to tell people that they had to bless God for the food they received. This is exactly the work that a person going on *shelichus* to India for instance has to go through. How do you give people what they need, and yet at the end demand that they perform a mitzvah? This is very difficult. To rectify the *chush* of our love for Jews, we have to actually begin with our love of God. But, to rectify *hod* from below to above, it begins *lechatchila* with people, unlike *chesed*. Even if I have a *chush* that I give thanks to God for everything that he does to me, I have to work on myself by beginning with giving thanks to other people. Again, a *chush* is your intrinsic ability or nature. It is your first nature. *Emet*, truth, is equal to second nature. So the question is where do you begin in order to create a second nature.

So with respect to *Rashbi*, the fourth crown, the crown of the good name, means to give thanks to other and to *Hashem*.

2. The partzuf of hakarat hatov

Keter: Learning from Hashem when to give thanks

Now we'll begin the *partzuf* of recognizing kindness, based on the *derashah* of the *Maharit*. Dozens of the great scholars of Torah are his students, among them the בעל הכנסת הגדולה.

In the *Keter* we'll begin with that even the *Aibeshter* recognizes kindness. This is the famous *vort* of the BST about the verse in *Tehilim*, וְלֹךְ אִד-נִי חֶסֶד כִּי אַתָּה תִשְׁלַם לְאִישׁ כַּמְעַשְׂהוּ, You God repay man with kindness, as to his actions. If it is payment, why is it kindness, and if it is kindness, why is it payment. The original teaching of the BST is that really the person who does something doesn't do anything (as *Chanan* can testify) or at most he is a מִמַּשׁ מְסִייעַ שְׂאִין בּוֹ מִמַּשׁ, like someone putting his hand on a beam being moved by someone else. He is a helper who is nothing, he is not carrying any weight—and yet he is called a

"helper" מסייע. So it is God doing everything, but if something good comes out of it, God repays him for putting his hand there. That is God's kindness and recognition of the goodness that someone has done as it were for Him. There is no greater recognition than this, that when someone has not even really done anything yet, God pays him for what he only seemingly did. The payment, תשלום, reveals the wholeness, שלמות. We learn that we should mimic God, and what we learn here is that even if someone only thinks that he did something good for me, or perhaps someone on the side thinks that he did something good for me, if there is any possibility that in whatever world this person has done something for me, I repay them, even if I know the truth. This is clearly the highest level of recognizing goodness. And God acts this way all the time. I do nothing, and yet He repays me, He thanks me. What does it mean that He repays me, He smiles at me and says "thank you for what you did," for putting on *Tefilin*, all the more so for helping someone else put on *Tefilin*.

With everything we will learn here, we will try to apply to how we should relate to the establishment. This is not an example that the *Maharit* comes to, but he almost reaches the question of how to give thanks to the ruling establishment that you live with, even if you really don't want to be here (we know that the Rebbe so much didn't like this, that he didn't want to live here, meaning he didn't want to have to give thanks to the establishment, as he did in Brooklyn where he lived, he gave a lot of thanks to the US). When we reach *malchut* of the *partzuf* (the *malchut* is connected with *keter*), even though I know that they didn't do anything good and that their intentions are all negative, still from the *keter* I learn that if there is some possibility that someone in the world thinks that they did good, we have to give thanks. This is what we learn from the *Aibeshter*. We can say that perhaps there are instances when the establishment thinks that it is not doing anything good, but it is doing something bad. But, that is a deeper issue that requires its own *Shulchan Aruch*, which to write requires a great deal of *da'at*. In any case, if it seems that someone has the intent or thinks that they did good, you have to recognize it.

Chochmah

The *chabad* here are not yet the examples that the *Maharit* gives, but they are related to the three crowns, the introduction to this topic (the first half of his *derush*). In *Pirkei Avot* the *hakarat hatov* comes from a *mishnah* by Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel who says, he who borrows money but does not pay back... that is the worst way to conduct oneself in the world. About the positive path a person should follow he says, he who sees what is about to be born. About the one who borrows and does not pay back his debts there is a verse, ולוה רשע ולא ישלם וצדיק חונך ונותן. In the psyche this means that he has no recognition of the good done with him. He received a loan and does not feel that he has to return the goodness granted him. A person who does not know how to give thanks, and thanks practically by giving back the loan, is called either כופר בטובה, or כפוי טובה. The second is *kefirah*, disbelief, and here it relates also to disbelief in God, because as the sages say, that a person who begins by not recognizing the goodness of his fellow man, כופר בטובת חברו, is destined in the end to come to not recognize God, כופר בה'. We will place this in *chochmah*,

wisdom because, the good side, the good path to follow is הרואה את הנולד, which is written about the wise man, in the Talmud (*Tamid*).

So to recognize goodness in this sense depends on one's wisdom. Such a person will not take a loan if they feel that there is any possibility that in the future the reality will arise that he won't be able to pay it back. This is also related to wisdom because about wisdom it says, והחכמה מאין תמצא, wisdom comes out of nothingness. When you see the entire world coming out of nothingness at every single moment, as the Tanya says, and of course this includes you too, who are now emerging from nothingness at this very moment, that is wisdom. To recognize God's goodness in this sense means that you feel the obligation that just as God has brought you out of nothingness, and you yourself are nothing were it not for God's kindness, I have to serve God for this. What then is the proper service? As the Magid said, that at every moment, a *tzadik* returns the world that emerged out of nothingness back to nothingness, by introducing *bitul*, selflessness into it. This is the service of recognizing goodness at the level of wisdom.

Binah

At the level of *binah*, understanding, the *Maharit* brings the saying of Ben Zoma, that after he saw the multitudes of Israel, 600,000 people, he made the blessings, ברוך חכם הרוים, the entirety of the souls of Israel, but then he said, "All these were created in order to serve me." One might think that just as *Aba* is *bitul* then *Ima* is *yesh*, and that what he said is some incredible hubris, some incredibly ridiculous sense of self. But, of course that doesn't make any sense. Rather, the sages say that a good guest, after departing, says, all that the host did, he did for me. But, the poor guest, when he leaves he says, the host gave me everything I needed. Of course the good guest doesn't say this out of hubris, it is all meant as thanks and gratitude to the host. Even though I am nothing, and not worthy of consideration, he did this all this for me, just a worm. Likewise said Ben Zoma to the host, to God, thank you for making all this for me. The *Maharit* brings in this context a verse from Job, וְכִּי תִשְׁאַל אֶפְעֶלֶוּ אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְדוּ אֲנָשִׁים, which has a similar meaning to what Ben Zoma did. This begins to show us a direction in how to treat our recognition of the goodness done to us by the establishment.

When looking at the work of a true sage, it's always interesting to look at how they begin their work. So looking at the *Maharit's* commentary on *Bereisheet*, we see that he writes that God made man a political creature, in the sense that a person needs to live with others. In fact, he writes that it's not good that a person should be independent and live alone. It's not moral to live from your own produce, and sew your own clothing, etc. You have to be in contact and have a connection with other people. A person who thinks they can get along by themselves, is suffering from a *kelipah*. He shouldn't imagine that he can live alone. And therefore a person should recognize the goodness that society has given him. He begins by saying that there were Rabbis who preceded him who complained that every animal in the world easily find all that it needs to live. Only man is lacking, because he can't fulfill his needs naturally, and he needs others to help him survive. But this is not a lack says the *Maharit*. Man is greater because he has wisdom, and wisdom is the ability to get along even in a state where not everything is easily

accessible. God gave us this wisdom and wanted us to use it. Therefore we had to be born into a world that forces us to fill what is lacking naturally.

The sense of Iyar is mind and it is meant to rectify the emotions. Emotions, *midot*, also means "coping" (התמודדות). What does mind teach the person? God gives us *sechel*, mind, חכמה בינה דעת, in order not just to become a good person in character, but also in order to learn how to cope with a reality that is difficult, that not automatically provides for our needs. The mind has to control the emotions in order to teach them how to cope, and if this wasn't the reality, then the mind would cease to work and be numbed.

The ABC's of chabad

It's interesting that the *Maharit* does not bring another *mishnah* that is very explicit in this matter that every person should say, The entire world was created for my sake. Indeed the first thing a person should learn is that *chabad* corresponds to the three statements, אין עוד מלבדו – there is nothing but Him; בשבילי נברא העולם – the world was created for my sake; and, גם זו לטובה, – This too is for the good.

In *da'at*, knowledge, the *Maharit* brings the verse, לב לדעת, He has not given you a knowing heart and ears that hear until this day. This phrase appears twice in the *Tanach*, but this is the main instance. *Rashi* writes that Moshe was very happy that day because he saw that the people were really yearning to serve God. But the literal meaning is that to have a knowing heart, is to recognize the kindness of the *Aibeshter*. For 40 years they've been traveling in the desert, and now suddenly God gives them a knowing heart—the ability to recognize God's kindness towards them. Since this happened on Moshe Rabbeinu's last day of his life, it must also be connected with Lag Ba'omer, *Rashbi's* last day of his life. From this the sages learn that only after 40 years does a person receive understanding of his teacher's consciousness and awareness. And what is that awareness in this case: To recognize God's kindness. *Moshe Rabbeinu* from the very first day recognized that it was God who doing all of this, he didn't think it was him.

To receive the Rebbe's consciousness is not as people think, to know how the Rebbe learns *Tanya*, or how he understands *Zohar*, etc. It is to see how the Rebbe recognizes God's kindness in everything that happens. And it took 40 years. Now that you have *Moshe Rabbeinu's* consciousness you can enter the Land of Israel. If we want to make anything here in the holy land we have to know how to give thanks. Every *chasid* wants the Rebbe's consciousness and that means that first of all he recognizes the good that is done with him. It also works in the other direction. If you want to receive all of the Rebbe's consciousness, you have to begin with recognizing kindness as he does.

Now these two statements, אין עוד מלבדו and בשבילי נברא העולם, these two come from going up on a roof top and like Kotzk or like Ben Zoma, looking at the world or the Jewish people from there.

A midrashic source for sibot (causes) – Rebbe Usher's shitah

Now if there's a *midrash* that exemplifies the Torah of causes of Rebbe Usher and the *Pri Ha'aretz*, it is about when Yitro asked his daughters why they came early and they said that an Egyptian man saved them. So Yitro says: Where is he? Call him so we can

give him thanks. Later, Yitro teaches us that we have to give thanks and recognize kindness, as it says *ויחד יתרו על כל הטובה*. Yitro had to teach us this because there apparently some difficulty that Jews have in accepting this very basic concept. Why did *Moshe Rabbeinu* agree to sit with Yitro? He apparently felt that Yitro had some important character trait, and that must have been his recognition of the kindness done with him.

Now all this is background. Why did they call him an Egyptian man? Because he was dressed like an Egyptian? No! This is not the literal reason. The sages explain that these daughters of Yitro weren't really *בפניית טובה*, rather that when they wanted to thank Moshe (like their father had taught them), but he said, don't thank me, It was an Egyptian man who saved you. Moshe told them the whole story of how there was an Egyptian man who was hitting a Jew, so he had to kill him and because of that he had to flee and all that he did was only because of that Egyptian man. This is the ultimate source in the sages for the concept of causes causing me to do the good that I do, and that it's not really me. A real Chassid really sees what is going to be born, and even if something negative happens, he already feels that something good is going to come out of all of this. He so strongly believes in God that he right away feels that something good will come out of this.

So the daughters came back home and said, no really father, it was an Egyptian man and told him the whole story. Still Yitro said, you have to give thanks to Moshe too, even as much as he as taken himself out of the picture. *Da'at* here means seeing that this too is part of the good. That all the good that came out of this whole affair, I attribute and give credit for to the first event. So this is *גם זו לטובה*. So far we have completed the intellectual *sefirot* of this *partzuf* of recognizing kindness.

Chesed

Now we'll see recognition of good in *chesed*, loving-kindness.

Today is a day of *segulah* for many children, many boys and girls that learn Torah and perform mitzvot. *במה יזכה נער את אורחו*, as the Magid said to the Alter Rebbe, that by having many guests a person merits to have a *na'ar*, a son. To give thanks it's not enough to just say thank you, you have to bring the person into your house and feed him and host him. This is like Abraham. The *chiddush* here is that you have to teach your daughters how to accept guests and bring them in, because at times, women's eyes are narrow when it comes to guests and they find it difficult to host them. The *tikun* of *עיני צרה* is to have *עיני שרה*, to have Sarah's eyes. Maybe these daughters were very modest and they said, how could we have thought of inviting him—that's not what we learnt in *Ya'alat Chen* (our school for girls in Yerushalayim). Still Yitro said, you should bring him here and host him. This is the simple meaning of recognizing kindness in *chesed*.

Gevurah

We've arrived now at *gevurah*, connected with Saul the king. Before he goes to make war on Amalek he calls upon the *chever hakeini* and tells them to flee from among the Amalekites. And he says that he is warning them and giving them this chance because you the *Keini* have done a kindness with all the Jewish people, when they came out of

Egypt. What kindness was this? The literal commentaries say that it was the kindness that Yitro showed towards Moshe. And this is counted as being a *chesed* with the entire people. There is another opinion that when Yitro came to the desert, they made a *seudah* a festive meal in his honor, and all the great elders of Israel enjoyed this meal, it is as if, in his honor, in his merit, everyone received kindness. The person who is the honorary person at a festive event is the reason for the entire kindness at this meal. So for this kindness, we do not want you the *Keini* to be killed with the Amalekites.

Saul here represents the entire Jewish people and his recognition of the kindness done is that he will not hurt the person who did the kindness. What is actually going on here internally? It is a clarification. The *Keini* are dwelling with the Amalekites. Thinking about our topic about giving thanks to the establishment, if within the establishment there are *Keini* and Amalekites, you have to distinguish and differentiate between the two. Moshe Rabbeinu himself has a great deal of *gevurah*, he is a zealot. But, even a zealot, when he goes against Amalek—in the end Saul didn't finish them off completely, showing that he had mercy in the wrong place—he has to show mercy in the right place, which in this case was in relation to the *Keini*. In general, all of our reality now in the land of Israel is that we are like in the time of Saul before the kingdom of David. Saul is a state of confusion, he has mercy on both the *Keini* and in the end on Amalek.

In any case, the recognition of kindness here is to be able to differentiate. Not to make gross generalizations. Not everything that is within Amalek is actually Amalek. Now who is the *Keini*. The *Keini* is from Cain, the left root of souls in the world. And here there is this leftist who is dwelling together with the Amalek of our generation—it is easy to imagine who these people are—and yet, we clarify, since you did a kindness with the rest of Israel, I do not want to hurt you together with them.

So here we have to recognitions of kindness, *chesed* and *gevurah*, that are both related to Yitro. Again, the second one is a negative kindness or thanks given back to the one who did kindness. Clarifying, taking the good out of the evil, is related to *gevurah*, might.

Tiferet

Now *tiferet*. In *tiferet* there is the *parshah* of *bikurim*, the first fruit, which is the basis of the *Hagadah* of Passover. *Rashi* explains that the first words, הגדתי היום, mean that I am not כפוי טובה. In this case, first we bring the first fruit to the Temple and then we read this *parshah* that is the *parshah* of giving thanks to God for giving us this fruit. In any case, what we see is that the thanksgiving in words is a complement to the act of giving thanks. *Da'at* we said is the knowing heart that recognizes that God did a kindness with me. In *tiferet* it is the main mitzvah in the Torah to give thanks with words.

The sages say that the main part of the mitzvah is to read the *parshah*, to say these words of thanks to God (whereas bringing the first fruit can be done even after *Shaou'ot*). The bringing of the fruit is the first 1/3 of *tiferet*, which is usually concealed, and saying the words of thanks corresponds to the bottom 2/3 of *tiferet*, which are usually revealed. This is one of the most beautiful mitzvot in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Now just the word בכורים stems from בכור, like firstborn, which in Kabbalah is related to *da'at*. So bringing the first fruit is the *da'at* and saying the words of thanks, reading the *parshah* of *bikurim*, that is the *tiferet*, the body of *da'at*.

Netzach

Now we go to *netzach* where we have two stories that the *Maharit* brings about King David. King David inherited the kingdom of Saul and became the eternal king of the Jewish people. All this was in merit of the fact that he recognizes kindness infinitely more than Saul. So if we want to rectify the state of Israel, we have to have infinitely more recognition of kindness than the state currently has.

The first story is that in David's will, he commands Solomon to do kindness with the sons of Barzilai the Giladi, who helped him during the time that he was fleeing from Absalom. Everyone then was against him—all the media was against him—everyone thought this was David's end. Then came Barzilai and did a kindness with all of David's people and he would not receive any thanks for his actions; instead he said do kindness to my children. David took this very seriously and said to Solomon that Barzilai's children should always eat at his table, meaning make them into important people in your government, men that you always consult with.

In our classes on honoring one's parents we learnt that everything that has to do with a will and testament is related to *netzach*, as *netzach* represents the son is the side of his father, ברא כרעא דאביה. In *chesed* it was Yitro talking to his daughters telling them to recognize kindness. David is the main aspect of kingdom and the construction of kingdom begins with *netzach*.

The second story is that after Saul and Yonatan his son are killed in battle with the Philistines on Mt. Gilboa, David was in the midst of fleeing from Saul. God then told David to go to Chevron and then all the people of his own tribe, Judah, came there and made him their king. There David ruled for 7 and a half years.

In the meantime, Saul's body was left to rot. After a time the people of *Yavesh Gilad* stole Saul's body and were able to bring it to Jewish burial. They were the people that Saul saved from Nachash, the battle that convinced the people that Saul was worthy of being king. What was David's reply when he heard this? He sent them an emissary telling them, you did kindness with the body of your King, I too will do kindness with you. The *Maharit* learns from this that someone who recognizes goodness and kindness also recognizes when it was done by someone else to a third party. The *Maharit* doesn't connect this with the idea that all Jews are responsible for one another (עריבים זה לזה) that it is because of that that he recognizes the kindness. He does mention that the Jewish people are like one piece of matter. This is similar to the idea in ancient astronomy that all the stars are revolving in a single sphere, but they are all just one large piece of matter. We see them as separate points because of how the sun illuminates them. He says that the Jewish people are like the stars in this picture. When seen from the earth they look like separate points, but from above, looking from the outside in, they are one big piece of matter. We can understand this even with modern cosmology if we take into consideration the existence of dark energy!

In any case, when David recognized this kindness, it was like he was elevating himself to see all the Jewish people as one thing. Again, he says to the people of Yavesh Gilad, that you did a kindness with Saul by bringing him to Jewish burial and I will do kindness with you. At first I thought this might correspond to *malchut* and not to *netzach* because *malchut* is all about feeling the community, feeling everyone around me. Now at the same time, David tells them that he has been anointed and appointed king by the people of his own tribe, Judah. Why does he tell them this? It's not to tell them how great he is. Rather, it's to reveal, explains the *Maharit*, that only a king can do such kindness. Only a king comes in place of another king, and so the next king is the one that can return kindness for kindness afforded the previous kings. So on the one hand, the *Maharit* says that every person should learn from David's recognition of kindness here, but on the other hand he says this is a special quality of the king. Now, what indeed was David's kindness towards the people of Yavesh Gilad? The *pshat* is that he promised them that if the Philistines try to take revenge on you for having stolen Saul's body, I will come to your aid. All promises (הבטחה), especially those promises that have to do with military (victory, and active confidence) actions are related to *netzach*. Why too do we put this in *netzach*? Because this is a kindness that is passed from generation to generation—from Saul to David—two generations of kings, like before when David gives the task of doing the kindness to the next king after him—Solomon.

Hod

Now what about in *hod*? There is the third story of David from which we learn that a Jew should recognize kindness and give thanks to a non-Jew and the greatest *chiddush* is who David did this kindness with him. David sent his condolences to Chanun the son of Nachash (the same Nachash, the king of Amon from before) on the death of his father Nachash. This was so astounding that Chanun's servants told him, it can't be that they are really coming to console you, they came to spy on us. Now why did David do this? Nachash was a wicked and evil king who tried to kill Saul and the people of Yavesh Gilad. The reason was that Nachash did a kindness with one of David's family. When David was fleeing from Saul, he sent his father and all his family to Moab to protect them, but then all of them were murdered there, except for one family member who fled to Nachash and Nachash protected him.

What we learn from this is that a rectified Jewish kingdom has to have good international relations. But, now says the *Maharit*, how is this possible particularly with Amon (Nachash is the king of Amon), about whom the Torah says, לא תדרוש שלומם וטובתם ער, עלים? The *Maharit* brings a *Semag* (*Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*) who brings a ruling that this verse relates only *lechatchila*, but not as thanksgiving for some goodness that they did to you. So again, we learn something about international relations, that if it is not Moab and Amon, we should seek out having good relations with the rest of the nations, *lechatchila*.

So both *netzach* and *hod* relate to David. And *hod* is all about the foreign relations of our rectified future state, just as *hod* extends out, like going out in foreign relations.

Yesod

Now *yesod*, foundation. This is the *tzadik yesod olam*. A great person in *Am Yisrael*, be it a king or a *tzadik* (the *Maharit* does not differentiate), he more than anyone else needs to recognize the kindness done by the entire Jewish people. He learns this from *Moshe Rabbeinu*, that when *Hashem* tells him to descend from the mountain He says: Go and descend, because your people have sinned. Why did he call them "your people"? To teach Moshe that anyone who is a leader of the Jewish people has to recognize that whatever greatness he has is only in merit of the people that he is sent to lead.

Why do we put this in the *yesod* and not in the *malchut*? Because this recognition is like the vessels that are higher than the lights, that the *yesod* feels that all that it has as a conduit between the higher *sefirot* and *malchut*, is all in merit of the *malchut*. This is like what Rabbi Akiva said: Yours and mine, are hers [his wife's]. *Rashbi's* ability to say that he is but a signpost in the world, that is all in merit of the Jewish people.

Malchut: Giving thanks to the establishment?

The *malchut* then is what we began with. How do I, a single individual, from below, give thanks properly to the community, to the establishment? Here a lot of *beirur* is needed, a lot of clarification. And according to what we are explaining this clarification is exactly what the rectification of *malchut* is. The first thought when someone asks me: do you recognize the kindness that the state of Israel has done for you? The first thought is that I want to say, that I recognize the kindness done by each individual that lives here.

This is like the grand-father of one of our students, Uri Zipori, who was a minister here who is responsible for much of the infrastructure. Even someone like Sharon built many things—until he lost his mind. Now someone will ask, can you really separate the individual minister from the state? All he did, he did thanks to the state. But, in my mind, to give thanks to the state is like to say thank you to the handle that holds the axe. There is the woodcutter, the axe, and there is the wood that is cut. So who do I give the thanks to? Seemingly I should give thanks to either the axe or the wood that was cut. Or maybe I need to give thanks to the woodcutter, i.e., to God, who made this whole "mess" to begin with. Is this enough? Is this a good enough answer? Have I answered the question?

In *Malchut Yisrael*, we explained that all of Zionism, this entire establishment is all growing from the yearning of the Jewish people for the land of Israel, the deepest point in the heart. In this sense, the essence of the establishment is what needs to be revealed. Like when you squeeze every last drop out of a Jew, you get his essence, which is a drop of the love of Israel. But this is only possible if you have an alternative reality to bring this drop into. In other words, if we do not yet have an alternative to the state, it is not possible yet to recognize the kindness of the current establishment.