



KINDER TORAH.™

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PARASHAS MASEI

LIFE'S JOURNEY

In the beginning of parashas Masei, the Torah details our travels during the forty years in the desert. Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that Hashem wanted to strengthen our *emunah* (faith) in Him. Therefore, He mentioned those places to remind us of the miracles that occurred for the Jewish people during those years. We were miraculously sustained by the *mun* and the water well of Miriam. The *ananei hakovod* (clouds of glory) miraculously protected us from all dangers. Remembering and reviewing these wondrous events helps us to remember the One who cared for us then and continues to care for us now.

As we look back on our own lives, we can sometimes piece together events and see how the hand of Hashem was guiding us along the way. A situation or event may have looked very bad at the time it happened. A few years later, when we have time to look back and reflect, we see that the event was not bad at all, but a step on the way to something very good. Reviewing all of the *chassadim* (acts of kindness) that Hashem has done for us in our lives will strengthen our *emunah*.

Kinderlach . . .

When you do not get something that you want is that good or bad? It seems bad, but it may be good. Maybe the thing that you want is harmful. Maybe it is good for you to learn that you cannot always have what you want. What seems bad is sometimes very good. We do not recognize the good until later. Perhaps we can share some stories at the Shabbos table about how Hashem has guided our lives, and the many good things He has done for us. We do not have to look too far to see Hashem's guiding hand. It is right there in our own lives.

FLATTERY WILL GET YOU NOWHERE

"Have a great day, Mr. Chovos!"
"You too Mr. Glick."

Mr. Chovos and Mr. Glick walk out of the *Beis HaKinesses* together after the *Shacharis* (morning) prayers. They part ways and begin walking home. Mr. Chovos begins thinking about his problems.

"It is easy for Mr. Glick to wish me a great day. However, it is not so simple for his wish to be carried out. I owe a lot of money. The bank is threatening to foreclose my mortgage, the power company wants to cut off my electricity, the grocery store refuses to extend me any more credit, and my tuition checks to the

Talmud Torah keep bouncing. I have to work hard all day, and also run around looking to borrow money to keep my family afloat. If I could just consolidate all of my debts into one small long-term payment, I would be okay. I just can't get credit for such a loan. Oy vey, what will I do?"

Mr. Chovos looks up, and much to his surprise, he sees the manager of his local bank standing in front of him. What a golden opportunity to speak to this important man! Perhaps in this relaxed atmosphere, Mr. Chovos can convince him to approve the loan that he needs. He smiles at the manager.

"Shalom Mr. Manager. I am sure that you do not recognize me, but I am Hammon Chovos, a client of your bank. I live here in the neighborhood. Can I help you with



anything? Do you need directions? Are you looking for someone?"

"Thank you very much for your offer Mr. Chovos. I am actually looking for someone – Mr. Bissel Glick. Perhaps you can show me where he lives."

"My pleasure Mr. Manager. I will walk with you to Mr. Glick's house."

"Thank you very much Mr. Chovos. While we are walking, let me tell you something about Mr. Glick. He has big problems. He is the most dishonest person that I know. Not only does he refuse to pay his loans, but he spreads vicious false lies about our bank."

Mr. Chovos winces. Even if these statements are true, they are *loshon hora*. It is definitely *ossur* (forbidden) for him to hear these words. However, he does not want to say anything that might possibly anger the bank manager. If he tells the manager that he is speaking *loshon hora*, he will probably never get the loan. If he tries to defend Mr. Glick, the manager will surely be upset with him. After all, the manager

clearly hates Mr. Glick. If he just keeps quiet, the manager will probably think that he is a fool and does not understand. Perhaps he can just smile and nod his head without saying anything. Mr. Chovos is truly confused. What should he do?

"You shall not pollute the land in which you are (Bamidbar 35:33). The Chofetz Chaim, in the introduction to his monumental sefer, calls this flattery, and lists it as a negative commandment – number sixteen. He cites several Gaonim who draw the source from the Gemora (Sota 41a). Agrippas the king was reading the Torah. The *chachomim* praised him. When he reached the verse that states that a foreigner may not become king, tears began to fall from his eyes. He was a descendant of Hordos – a foreigner. The *chachomim* said to him, "Do not fear, Agrippas. You are our brother." This statement of flattery sealed the fate of the Jewish people.

Included in this *aveyra* is speaking *loshon hora* about a person's enemy to flatter the person and gain favor in his eyes. Additionally, approving of someone else's *loshon hora* in order to find favor in his eyes is also considered flattery. In both cases, the sinner transgresses the sin of speaking or accepting *loshon hora* in addition to the sin of flattery. The Chofetz Chaim warns that a person should give up all of his money rather than transgress a negative commandment in the Torah. Therefore, Mr. Chovos should not have approved of the Manager's *loshon hora*. He should trust the Almighty, who has the power to provide him with the loan in a permissible manner.

Kinderlach . . .

Flattering a sinner is terrible. We have a *mitzvah* to correct a sinner, not to flatter him. The urge may be tempting when the sinner is an influential person who can grant you a favor that you need, or if he is a friend who has helped you in the past. How can you have the heart to correct him? Remember – the Torah forbids us from speaking or accepting *loshon hora*! When that *loshon hora* is for flattery, we have an additional *aveyra*. You are doing him and yourself a favor by stopping the *loshon hora*. How can you have the heart to transgress two horrible *aveyros*? Don't you realize that Hashem can grant you the favor without the flattery? Don't get confused! Find favor in Hashem's eyes by not speaking *loshon hora*.

Parasha Questions:

- How many *Arei Miklat* were there and where were they located? (35:13,14)
- Until when does the accidental murderer have to stay in *Ir Miklat*? (35:25)
- Can one get out of the death penalty with money? (35:31)

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