

## The Preparation for Receiving the Torah on Shavuot

### By Acknowledging: "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו" We Achieve: "מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ"

In honor of Shavuot, which approaches auspiciously, let us examine a subject pertaining to **"zman matan toraseinu"** — the events surrounding the giving of the Torah. Our blessed sages teach us that when Moshe Rabeinu ascended to the heavens to receive the Torah on behalf of Yisrael, a vehement argument ensued with the ministering angels. The malachim argued: **מה "לילוד אשה בינינו"** — what is a mere mortal doing up here amongst us? It is more appropriate to give us the Torah rather than to a lowly creature of flesh and blood.

In the midst of this heated confrontation, HKB"H instructed Moshe to respond to the malachim; however, Moshe feared that they would incinerate him with the vapors from their mouths. Finally, HKB"H promised to protect him by saying: **"אחוז בכסא כבודי — וחזור להן תשובה"** — **grab hold of My "Kisei HaKavod" and supply them with an answer.** Here is the dialogue that ensued between Moshe Rabeinu and the "malachei hashareit" as depicted by the Gemara (Shabbas 88b):

"אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, בשעה שעלה משה למרום, אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב"ה, רבונו של עולם מה לילוד אשה בינינו, אמר להן לקבל תורה בא. אמרו לפניו חמורה גנוזה שגנוזה לך תשע מאות ושבעים וארבעה דורות קודם שנברא העולם אתה מבקש ליתנה לבשר ודם, (תהלים ח-ה) מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו, (שם ב) ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ, אשר תנה הודך על השמים. אמר לו הקב"ה למשה החזיר להן תשובה, אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם מתיירא אני שמא ישרפוני בהבל שבפיהם, אמר לו אחוז בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה..."

אמר לפניו, רבונו של עולם תורה שאתה נותן לי מה כתיב בה (שמות כ-ב), אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, אמר להן למצרים ירדתם, לפרעה השתעבדתם, תורה למה תהא לכם... שוב מה כתיב בה (שם יג), לא תרצח, לא תנאף, לא תגנוב, קנאה יש ביניכם, יצר הרע יש ביניכם. מיד הודו לו להקב"ה, שנאמר (תהלים ח-י) ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ, ואילו תנה הודך על השמים לא כתיב."

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: When Moshe ascended to the heights, the ministering angels said before HKB"H: "Master of the Universe! What is someone born of a woman doing amongst us?" He replied: "He has come to receive the Torah." They said before Him: "The coveted treasure that was

stored by You for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created! You intend to give it to flesh and blood?! (Tehillim 8, 5) *What is a mortal that You should remember him or the son of man that You should recall him?* (ibid. 2) *Hashem, our Lord, how grand is Your name in all the earth that You bestow Your glory upon the heavens.*" HKB"H said to Moshe: "Give them an answer." Moshe said before Him: "Master of the Universe, I fear lest they burn me with the breath in their mouths." HKB"H said to him: "Take hold of the My Kisei HaKavod and answer them" ...

Moshe said before Him: "Master of the Universe, what is written in the Torah that You are giving me? (Shemos 20, 2) *I am Hashem, your G-d, who took you out of Eretz Mitzrayim.*" Addressing the malachim, he said, "Did you descend to Mitzrayim? Were you enslaved by Pharaoh? Why should you have the Torah?" ... "What else is written in it? (Shemos 20, 13) *You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal.*" Addressing the malachim, he said: "Is there envy among you? Is there a yetzer hara among you?" Immediately, they conceded to HKB"H, as it is said (Tehillim 8, 10): *Hashem, our Master, how grand is Your name throughout the land.* Now, it is not written: *bestow Your glory upon the heavens.*

### The Proclamation: "מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ" Is Both a Condemnation and a Concession

Upon careful examination, we discover that our blessed sages teach us to take notice that David HaMelech, Yisrael's sweet psalmist, employs the same passuk twice in the same "mizmor" (Tehillim 8): **"ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ"** — **Hashem, our Lord, how grand is Your name in all the earth.** He uses it the first time in the second passuk of the "mizmor" in conjunction with the phrase: **"אשר תנה הודך על השמים"** — **"that You bestow Your glory upon the heavens."** At the conclusion of the "mizmor," he uses the passuk again (passuk 10) without any additional phrases.

In this manner, via their "ruach hakodesh," they teach us that David HaMelech sang this psalm in celebration of Moshe Rabeinu's remarkable victory over the heavenly malachim. He ascended to the heavens to receive the Torah and was challenged by the malachim; they claimed that it was inappropriate for HKB"H to give the Torah to mere mortals. Therefore, the first time David HaMelech employs the passuk, he uses it to reflect the malachim's challenge: Why are You revealing Your grand name down on earth by bestowing the Torah upon Yisrael? Wouldn't it be preferable to give the Torah to us in the heavens: "תנה הודך על השמים"?

This interpretation is substantiated by passuk 5; there David HaMelech presents the malachim's powerful argument: "מה אנוש כי תפקדנו" — **what is man that You should remember him, and the son of a mere mortal that You should be mindful of him?** Yet, as the Gemara describes, Moshe Rabeinu subsequently defeats the malachim resoundingly with his compelling response. Therefore, when David HaMelech employs the passuk again with the same passuk: "ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ" — it conveys a different message. It is no longer a challenge and condemnation but rather an admission on the part of the malachim; they concede that it was appropriate for HKB"H to reveal His grand name throughout the universe—even down on earth.

Let us endeavor to achieve a better understanding of the malachim's initial objection and subsequent submission. At first, they use this passuk to object to the giving of the Torah to Yisrael; then they use the passuk a second time to concede and agree with HKB"H's decision.

Additionally, we do not find that Moshe's response addresses the malachim's powerful argument: "מה אנוש כי תפקדנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו". They emphasize the fact that human beings possess a yetzer hara and are liable to sin. As such, why would the Almighty want to give them the Torah? Wouldn't it be preferable to give the Torah to malachim who are untainted by sin—"תנה הודך על השמים"?

Moshe Rabeinu does however prove convincingly that the Torah's mitzvos as presented to Yisrael down on earth are not applicable to the malachim. Among the various mitzvos he mentions, are the following mitzvos lo ta'aseh: "לא תרצח, לא תנאף, לא תגנוב"; obviously, murder, adultery and stealing (kidnapping) do not apply to the malachim. He emphasizes this point by asking them rhetorically: "קנאה יש ביניכם, יצר הרע יש ביניכם"—emphasizing that they are not subject to jealousy and are not influenced by a yetzer hara.

This prompts the malachim to present the following argument before HKB"H: "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו"—why are You so inclined to give the Torah to creatures of flesh and blood, who are susceptible to

the influences of a yetzer hara? It would seem to be preferable to give the Torah to the malachim; they lack a yetzer hara and are not susceptible to sin. So, how did Moshe succeed in using the malachim's very argument—that Yisrael possess a yetzer hara that influences their actions—to defeat them?

## The Malachim Wished to Receive the Torah in Its Heavenly Format

This mystery is amplified by the explanation of the Maharsha in Chiddushei Aggadot. According to the Maharsha (Chiddushei Aggados, Shabbas) and the Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Yisro), the malachim never intended to receive the Torah in the format revealed to us. For, they were well aware that the performance of mitzvos utilizing physical props and implements found in this world was not relevant to them.

Instead, they yearned to receive the Torah in a more mystical and spiritual form — with the combinations of letters as they appear above. Hence, they referred to the Torah as: "חמדה גנוזה" — **a coveted treasure**. They were referring to the spiritual, hidden form of the Torah stored in the heavenly realms. This prompted their claim: **"Bestow Your glory upon the heavens."** As spiritual creatures, they are better suited to fathom the meanings of this mystical form of the Torah — the splendor and glory of the Torah.

We find this wonderful idea presented in greater detail by the Maggid of Dubno, zy"a, in Ohel Yaakov (Yitro). When Moshe ascended to the heavens, the Torah did not yet exist in the simple format which was presented to Yisrael down on earth at the time of Matan Torah. Consequently, seeing the Torah in its heavenly, spiritual configuration, the malachim queried: **"What is the offspring of a woman doing amongst us?"** Seemingly, it would be preferable to give this spiritual configuration of the Torah to the heavenly malachim, who are spiritual creatures; it is not appropriate for human beings formed of flesh and blood: **"What is a mortal that You should remember him or the son of man that You should recall him?"**

In this manner, he explains Moshe's rebuttal of the malachim's claim: **"Master of the Universe, what is written in the Torah that You are giving me?"** While it is true that the heavenly malachim are more capable of comprehending the heavenly configuration of the Torah, nevertheless that is not true regarding **"the Torah You are giving me"** — to take down to earth. That Torah contains mitzvos that can only be performed by human beings made of flesh and blood in Olam HaZeh. As such, the malachim's claim to the Torah is effectively null and void.

Thus, our bewilderment is even greater. How did Moshe Rabeinu thwart the ministering angel's argument: **"מה אנוש כי תזכרנו"**—**what is a mortal man that You should remember him?** Why should You give the Torah to mortal men, who are likely to fall prey to the yetzer, in a format characterized by mitzvos that demand physical performance? Furthermore, how did Moshe succeed in turning this argument against them? For, it is true, that in that format, the Torah is not appropriate for the malachim; for, they are not subject to jealousy and are not influenced by a yetzer hara.

### HKB"H Only Bestows Chochmah upon One Who Possesses Chochmah

Let us begin with an enlightening concept. We have learned in the Gemara about a wonderful "segulah"—beneficial practice--for attaining the chochmah of the Torah (Berachos 55a):

**"אמר רבי יוחנן, אין הקב"ה נותן חכמה אלא למי שיש בו חכמה, שנאמר (דניאל ב-כא) יהב חכמתא לחכימין ומנדעא ליודעי בינה. שמע רב תחליפא בר מערבא ואמרה קמיה דרבי אבהו, אמר ליה אתון מוהתם מותניו לה, אנן מהכא מתנינן לה דכתיב (שמות לא-ו) 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 Tachlifa 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."**

We learn from this passage an important principle. HKB"H only confers upon a person the Torah's chochmah, if he has already achieved the status of a "chacham"—a wise person. This is the message conveyed by the passuk: **"יהב חכמתא לחכימין"**. Hence, this leads us to conclude that in preparation for receiving the Torah, one must strive to be considered a "chacham." By doing so, HKB"H will confer upon him the chochmah of the Torah.

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 the 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 in order to be categorized as wise--**"חכימין"**—in order to be endowed with HKB"H's chochmah.

### The First Chochmah Is Humility--כ"ח מ"ה

It is with pleasure that we present upon the royal table a very nice explanation found in the Arugos HaBosem (Tetzaveh). He refers to a teaching from our blessed sages stating that it is impossible to merit the chochmah of the Torah without the attribute of humility. The Gemara states (Ta'anis 7a):

**"למה נמשלו דברי תורה למים, דכתיב (ישעיה נה-א) הוי כל צמא לכו למים, לומר לך מה מים מניחין מקום גבוה והולכין למקום נמוך, אף דברי תורה אין מתקיימין אלא במי שדעתו שפלה."**

**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).**

Similarly, the Gemara states (Sotah 5a): **"לעולם ילמד אדם מדעת: A person should always learn from the "da'at" of his Maker; for HKB"H passed over the taller mountains and hills and rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai. Additionally, the Gemara teaches us (Pesachim 66b): "כל המתיהר אפ חכם הוא חכמתו מסתלקת ממנו"-- anyone who becomes haughty, if he is a wise man, his wisdom abandons him.**

The Arugos HaBosem presents an idea brought down in many of our holy sources that the designation **חכמ"ה** is composed of the letters **כ"ח מ"ה**—alluding to the attribute of humility. 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): **"זוה מורה אותיות מוחשב"ה - חשב מ"ה, לחשוב תמיד בשפלותו, על דרך ונחנו מה, ועל דרך זה מוחשב"ה - חשב מ"ה"**. He says that the word **מוחשב"ה**—meaning thought—can be viewed as **חשב מ"ה**—indicating that a person should always think of himself as **מ"ה**, insignificant. This is the thrust of Moshe's declaration: **"ונחנו מה"**. In similar fashion, the word **חכמ"ה**—meaning wisdom—can be reconfigured to form **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: 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 "מה", 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 המתיירר** "אם חכם הוא חכמתו מסתלקת ממנו". As we have learned, the designation of **חכם** 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 **מ"ה**—humility—his chochmah abandons him.

It is worth adding that even according to the simple, straightforward understanding of **"חכמה"**, we find an amazing association between **"חכמה"** and humility. For, we have learned in the Mishnah (Avot 4, 1): **"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 present in the word **חכמה** - **כח מ"ה**—and, as a result, is willing to learn from all people.

Now, we return to the words of the Arugos HaBosem. He explains 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 **חכמה**; he must adopt the attribute of humility—embodying the ideal of **כח מ"ה**. As a reward, HKB"H will influence 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.

### HKB"H Treats the Humble Person with Humility to Reveal His Chochmah to Him

Continuing onward and upward, let us explain at greater length the amazing connection between these two forms of chochmah: (1) Man's chochmah--**כח מ"ה**—reflected by his humility and (2) the chochmah he merits receiving from HKB"H. First, however, let us explain the analogy of Torah to water: **"מה מים מניחין מקום גבוה"** -- **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).**

It is well-known that the holy Torah, representing HKB"H's chochmah, has no boundaries or limits. It was necessary for HKB"H to humbly constrict and minimize His infinite chochmah,

step by step, until it could take on a physical, material form. Otherwise, the Torah would have remained beyond the grasp of mankind. This concept is explained by the author of the Tanya in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 4):

**"ואף דהקב"ה נקרא אין סוף ולגדולתו אין חקר ולית מחשבה תפיסה ביה כלל... הנה על זה אמרו (מגילה לא.) במקום שאתה מוצא גדולתו של הקב"ה שם אתה מוצא ענוותנותו, וצמצום הקב"ה רצונו וחכמתו בתרי"ג מצוות התורה ובהלכותיה, ובצירופי אותיות תנ"ך ודרשותיהן שבאגדות ומדרשי חכמינו ז"ל, בכדי שכל הנשמה או רוח ונפש שבגוף האדם תוכל להשיג בדעתה, ולקיימן כל מה שאפשר לקיים מהן במעשה דבור ומחשבה..."**

ולכן נמשלה התורה למים, מה מים יורדים ממקום גבוה למקום נמוך, כך התורה ירדה ממקום כבוד שהיא רצונו וחכמתו יתברך... ומשם נסעה וירדה בסתר המדרגות ממדרגה למדרגה בהשתלשלות העולמות, עד שנתלבשה בדברים גשמיים ועיני עולם הזה שהן רוב מצוות התורה ככולם והלכותיה, ובצירופי אותיות גשמיות בדיו על הספר עשרים וארבעה ספרים שבתורה נביאים וכתובים, כדי שתהא כל מחשבה תפיסה בהן".

HKB"H is referred to as **"Ein Sof"**—His greatness is unfathomable and He is beyond human comprehension . . . Regarding this fact, they said (Megillah 31a): **"Where you find HKB"H's greatness, there you find His humility."** HKB"H condensed His will and His chochmah into the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and their associated halachot, and into the combinations of the letters of the Tanach and their elucidations in the aggados and Midrashim of Chazal; so that man's neshamah, spirit and physical being would be able to comprehend them and fulfill them as much as humanly possible in action, speech and thought . . .

Therefore, the Torah is compared to water. Just as water travels downward from the higher ground to the lower ground, so, too, did the Torah come down from her place of glory—the blessed Almighty's will and chochmah . . . From there, she travelled and descended systematically from level to level, and from world to world until she took on the physical, material form of Olam HaZeh—which are the majority of the mitzvos of the Torah and their halachot, and the combinations of physical letters inscribed with ink on parchment—the twenty-four books of the Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim—so that every mind should be able to grasp them.

Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Megillah 12b): **"במדה שאדם"** -- **in the manner a person deals with others, so will Hashem deal with him.** In a similar vein, the Zohar hakadosh states (Lech Lecha 88a): **"באתערותא דלתתא אשתכח אתערותא לעילא."** In other words, as a result of man's good deeds down below, a reaction is

triggered above—resulting in reward and abundance. The Shela hakadosh (Mishpatim) describes this phenomenon in the name of the Midrash regarding the passuk (Tehillim 121, 6):

"ה' צלך. מהו ה' צלך, כצלך, מה צלך אם אתה מושק לו הוא מושק לך, ואם אתה בוכה לו הוא בוכה כנגדך, ואם אתה מראה לו פנים זעומות או מסוכרות אף הוא נותן Hashem לך כך, אף הקב"ה ה' צלך, כשם שאתה הווה עמו הוא הווה עמך." "Hashem is your shadow." Just as your shadow mirrors your actions, so, too, HKB"H acts like your shadow. His behavior toward you reflects your behavior toward Him.

Now, this illuminates for us the amazing connection between the degree of a person's humility and his comprehension of the Torah. In its original form, the Torah is infinite; however, HKB"H in His infinite mercy and kindness constricted His vast chochmah. As the author of the Tanya describes it, this is an example of: **במקום**—His greatness is displayed through His humility. Therefore, if a person is humble and lowly down on earth, HKB"H treats him in kind with humility—consistent with the notion of **"ה' צלך"—Hashem is your shadow.** He restricts His chochmah in order to influence a person. This is the meaning of the analogy. The Torah is compared to water; it travels downward from above to a place of lowliness—to the humble person.

### Every Person Must Serve Hashem with the Two Aspects of מ"ה

Now, let us demonstrate how what we have learned sheds light for us on an idea presented by the Tzemach Tzaddik, authored by the great Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz, zy"a, (Lech Lecha), in the name of his elder, the great Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kosov, zy"a, the author of the Ahavas 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: **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: **מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ-- Hashem, our Lord, how grand is Your name in all the earth.**

He proceeds to apply this concept to explain by dint of "remez"—allusion—an elucidation in the Gemara (Pesachim 68b): **כתוב אחד אומר (בשביעי של פסח דברים טז-ח) עצרת לה' אלקיך, וכתוב אחד אומר (בשמיני עצרת במדבר כט-לה) עצרת תהיה לכם... חלקהו חציו לה' וחציו לכם—**one passuk states: **"It is an 'atzeres' for Hashem, your G-d"; while another passuk states: "It shall be an 'atzeres' for you." ... Therefore, divide it up—half for Hashem and half for**

**you.** The word **לכ"ם** (90)—meaning "for you"—equals two times **מ"ה** (45). Thus, it is incumbent upon a person to divide the **לכ"ם** into two compartments: (1) **"חציו לה"**—one half of **לכ"ם** equaling **מ"ה**, recognizing the greatness of the Creator: **מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ** and (2) **"וחציו לכם"**—one half of **לכ"ם** 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 "yetzias 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"**.

Like a servant in the presence of one's master, I would like to add a thought to their sacred words. Both aspects of מ"ה are intimately related to one another. Initially, a person must recognize his own lowliness and insignificance—the first aspect of מ"ה. Based solely on his own deeds and accomplishments, he is not worthy to have HKB"H reveal His chochmah to him. By acknowledging this fact, he merits **"midah k'neged midah"**—measure for measure—that HKB"H reacts in kind. HKB"H demonstrates His attribute of humility by restricting His vast chochmah—like water going down to a lower point. This demonstrates the second aspect of מ"ה; HKB"H adopts the attribute of humility, the quality of מ"ה, to reveal the chochmah of His Torah.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the following Mishnah (Avos 2, 1): **"דע מה למעלה ממך עין רואה ואוזן שומעת: 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 Kedushas Levi (Metzora) and the Nefesh HaChaim (Chapter 4), as well, all provide the following interpretation: **"דע מה למעלה ממך"**—know that everything that transpires above in the heavenly realms is determined by your actions; it is all **"ממך"**—from you.

Based on what we have learned, we can propose that the Tanna intends to teach us the following: **"דע מה למעלה ממך"**—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, "מִמּוֹךְ". You must first behave in a manner consistent with the quality of מִזֵּה, namely humility, as reflected by the passuk: **"מִזֵּה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ"**. As a consequence, you will awaken HKB"H to act above in a similar manner, displaying the quality of מִזֵּה—humility.

How nicely this explains and solves the riddle presented by our sages. Based on the passuk: "יהב חכמתא לחכימין"—they explain that HKB"H only bestows chochmah on a person who is already wise. Now, as we have learned, there are two aspects of חכמ"ה. The one aspect comes from man himself--ה"כ. He must recognize that he himself is unworthy of receiving anything. This is implied by the passuk: "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו"—man is not worth remembering. Yet, by acknowledging his insignificance, he awakens the second aspect of chochmah—the כה מ"ה displayed by HKB"H. HKB"H humbles Himself in order to reveal the chochmah of the Torah. This is conveyed by the passuk: "מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ".

## Moshe Rabeinu's Profound Response to the Malachim

We can now rejoice at having gained a better understanding of the heated debate that took place between the malachim and Moshe Rabeinu in the heavens. When they heard that Moshe had come to receive the Torah on behalf of Yisrael, they began their argument with: **ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ, תנה הודך על השמים**. In other words, why are You, Hashem, Our Master, King of the Universe, acting with humility, consistent with the quality of **מ"ה**? You are constricting Your vast chochmah in order to reveal Your great name down on earth: **מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו**. It makes more sense and is preferable that You give the Torah to us in the heavens.

To which HKB"H said to Moshe: **"אֲחֹזֵז בְּכֶסֶד וְחִזְזוּ לְהַן תְּשׁוּבָה"**—**grab hold of My "Kisei HaKavod" and respond to them.** HKB"H was hinting to Moshe that he should provide them with an answer contained within their question. They were claiming that it was beneath Hashem's "kavod" to give the Torah to mortal men. So, HKB"H intimated that the opposite was true: **"אֲחֹזֵז בְּכֶסֶד כְּבוֹדִי"**—explain to them that HKB"H's "kavod" is in fact displayed by revealing the Torah to men, who are lowly, physical creatures, who recognize their own inadequacies: **"מִמָּה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ"**. Due to his display of humility, man merits—"midah k'neged midah"—reciprocity from above, in keeping with the concept of **"Hashem is your shadow."** Hence, HKB"H humbly restricts His chochmah, thereby demonstrating His true greatness: **"מִמָּה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכֹל הַשָּׁמַיִם"**.

This then was the thrust of Moshe's response by referring to that which is written in the Torah: **”שׁוּב מִזֶּה כְּתִיב בְּךָ, לֹא תִרְצֵחַ, לֹא תִנָּאֵף, לֹא תַגְנוּב, יֵצֵר הָרָע יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם.”** In other words, seeing as you are not susceptible to jealousy and you lack a yetzer hara, you are incapable of personifying the quality of **מִ”ה**. You are incapable of admitting that you are unworthy and unsuitable to receive the Torah; for this very reason, you demanded that HKB”H give you the Torah.

This, in fact, is the reason HKB"H chose to give the Torah specifically to Yisrael—who possess a yetzer hara and are susceptible to jealousy. This causes them to be humble and low-spirited to the point that they say of themselves what you argued about them: "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו"—based on our actions, we are not worthy of anything. We reiterate this message on a daily basis in our morning prayers (לעולם יהא אדם): "מה אנו, מה חיינו, מה חסדנו, מה צדקותינו, מה ישועתנו, מה כוחנו, מה גבורתנו" —What are we? What is our life? What are our acts of kindness? What is our righteousness? What is our salvation? What is our strength? What is our might?

When the malachim heard Moshe's profound response: **"מִיד הוֹדוּ לוֹ לְהִקְבֹּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ה' אֲדוֹנֵנוּ מִה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ, וְאֵילֹו תִנָּה הוֹדֵךְ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם**—they immediately conceded to HKB"H. In place of their original argument: **"מִה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ"**—which was intended as a condemnation, wanting to know why HKB"H was adopting a posture of **"מִ"ה**, constricting and diminishing His chochmah down on earth; they now proclaimed in total agreement: **"מִה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ**" **"בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ"** Your greatness is revealed through Your humility, by constricting Your chochmah down on earth.

Therefore, in honor of the holiday of Shavuos, which approaches auspiciously, let us fulfill the words of the Gemara (Pesachim 68b): **"הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לכם, מאי טעמא יום שניתנה בו תורה הוא"** - **all authorities concede that on Atzeres, we also require the criterion of "for you" ("lachem"); what is the reason? It is the day on which the Torah was given.** Based on what we have learned, we can propose the following allusion. On Shavuos, when the Torah was given to Yisrael, everyone concedes that it is necessary to serve Hashem in the sense of **לכם**—which equals two times **מ"ה**. We must take stock of our accomplishments of the past year and recognize that based on the Torah that we learned and our good deeds, we are still undeserving—in keeping with the notion of: **"מה"** **אנוש כי תזכרנו**. In the merit of this admission and acknowledgement, we will inspire HKB"H above—"midah k'neged midah"—to treat us in kind in accordance with the quality of **מ"ה** to reveal His Torah to us, thereby demonstrating His greatness: **"מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ"**.

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