

Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d: that it was He who gave you strength the make wealth. (8:18)

How easy it is to believe in ourselves – to think that our power is the result of our own strength; our battle skills, the result of our being formidable warriors. Hashem wants us to dispel this notion, by remembering that whatever success we enjoy is only because He gives us the means. In his *Ben Ish Chai*, **Horav Yosef Chaim, zl, m'Bagdad**, observes that whenever it is demanded of a person to remember, it is because it is concerning a subject that he is prone to forget. Indeed, there are six places in which the Torah enjoins us to remember, the *Sheish Zechiros*: the Egyptian exodus; Revelation; the incursion of Amalek; the trials of the forty-year trek in the Wilderness; Miriam's speaking ill of Moshe; and the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos* – all of these remembrances are to reinforce our memory, so that it does not fall prey to the weakness of forgetting.

The **Maharia** explains that we are commanded to “Remember the *Shabbos*,” because, by nature, man will otherwise lose sight of its distinction and compare it to the rest of the week. Six days a week he labors, employing all thirty-nine primary categories of labor which are prohibited on *Shabbos*. He became habituated in this lifestyle, making it difficult to draw the line between *Shabbos* and weekday. Thus, the Torah reminds him with the *mitzvah*, *Zachor es yom HaShabbos l'kadsho*, “Remember the *Shabbos* day to sanctify it.”

Likewise, explains *Rav Yosef Chaim*, man becomes complacent with life. He works, makes a living, invests and receives a decent return for his money; basically, life seems to go smoothly – as expected. He presses the right buttons; he receives the right responses. Suddenly, he thinks that it is all about him. He is the reason for his own success. He went to the right schools, made the right contacts, acted appropriately – so what could go wrong? He has done it all himself!

It is so easy to lose sight, to forget, that Hashem is the Source of our success. Thus, He enjoins us to remember. It is better that we should remember of our own accord, then that He has to “remind” us.

Rav Yosef Chaim employs this premise to explain why *Chazal* established the obligation to offer thanks by way of *Bircas HaGomel*, concerning four specific instances: one who was healed from an illness; been freed from prison; traveled across the sea; traveled through the desert. When we think about it, in each of these instances, one is predisposed to err and think that his success has been his doing.

One who emerges healthy from an illness that otherwise could have taken a fatal turn often thinks that it was his choice of hospital, physician, procedure, which raised his odds for recovery. Hashem is usually farthest back in a remote place in his mind. This idea would appear to have support in the instances of a traveler who successfully crosses the sea, or one who makes it through the wilderness. It will always be the choice of a sturdy boat, captain, sailors, caravan with proper

preparations, and guards for safekeeping. The individual who is released from prison ultimately attributes his success to a benevolent parole board, governor, warden, civic leaders, who were on his side. In all of the above examples, it is only natural to ascribe one's delivery from danger to anything and anyone – but Hashem. Thus, in an effort to reinforce our belief in the Almighty as the Source for all that occurs, *Chazal* initiated the obligation to offer a *Korban Todah*, Thanksgiving Sacrifice, or to recite the *Gomel* blessing. We must remember to Whom gratitude really belongs. This, too, is an intrinsic part of gratitude.