

השם הוא

את שם ה'



Hallel Unit Lesson I

Objective: Given a 'Hallel musical note' cutout, students will demonstrate their knowledge of 'what makes praise meaningful' by listing the three unit objectives.

Anticipatory Set: On the board, write the words: "What makes praise meaningful?" Present students with the various cartoons. (See accompanying materials). Below are transcriptions of the conversations contained:

Card One:

Sara: Chavy, you're so special. I really think that your personality is effervescent and your demeanor is so refined.

Chavy: Thank you, Sara! What is 'effervescent', anyway? And what's my demeanor?

Sara: Hmmmm. I'm not really sure.

Is this praise meaningful? Why or why not?

Card Two:

(Monday) Teacher: Chavy, your work is fantastic! Simply the best!

Chavy (thinking): Wow, I must have done a good job!

(Tuesday) Teacher: Chavy, your work is fantastic! Simply the best!

Chavy (thinking): She just told me the same thing yesterday!

(Wednesday) Teacher: Chavy, your work is fantastic! Simply the best!

Chavy (thinking): This is starting to sound familiar...

(Thursday) Teacher: Chavy, your work is fantastic! Simply the best!

Chavy (thinking): I don't think this is such a special compliment, anymore. I guess Morah doesn't intend it for anything special... she says it every day.

Is this praise meaningful? Why or why not?

Card Three:

Chavy (writing): In honor of this special occasion, of Bubby's eighty fifth birthday party, I'd like to list some of the things that stand out about Bubby. Firstly, Bubby's cinnamon cookies are simply the best! Secondly, Bubby always has fresh kokosh whenever we come for Shabbos. Thirdly...

Chavy: Here Sara – what do you think of this list that I wrote, to say over at Bubby's party?

Sara: Chavy! You really mean this?

Chavy: What's wrong with it? These are all true – and I really do appreciate all this!

Sara: Sure, but you can thank Bubby for that any day. This is a special occasion – the whole extended family will be there. Shouldn't you focus on the bigger things about Bubby?

Is this praise meaningful? Why or why not?

After all students have reviewed the cards, direct their attention to the board and discuss: we have just viewed several examples of praise that was clearly *not* meaningful. Now, let's 'learn from those mistakes' and compile a list of rules for 'Meaningful Praise.' Prompt students for responses. The final list should include:

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1. Praise is meaningful when you understand what you are saying.
2. Praise is meaningful when it is reserved for special occasions.
3. Praise is meaningful when it addresses the 'main thing' that you expect to be praised for.

Tell the Objective: In the next few lessons, we are going to explore a special unit of praise: Hallel. We will discuss how these three 'rules' for meaningful praise are incorporated into our תפילה.

Purpose: Then, when we actually say the סדר הלל, we can be certain that our praise is meaningful and treasured before Hashem!

Input: Before we actually learn about these three rules, let's first discuss a basic overview of Hallel. *Note to teachers: This section should be completed via the accompanying graphic organizer in order to collect prior knowledge and scaffold on it.*

- Where is סדר הלל taken from?
ספר תהלים: קיג – קיח
- What is the difference between הלל שלם and חצי הלל?
הלל שלם includes all of the פרקים from קיג through קיח. The חצי הלל omits two paragraphs: אהבתי כי ישמע and לא לנו.
- When do we say הלל שלם?
We say הלל שלם on the following days:
The first two days of פסח
The two days of שבועות
All the days of עזרת שמיני and סוכות
All the days of חנוכה
- When do we say חצי הלל?
We say חצי הלל on the following days:
The last six days of פסח
ראש חדש

Is saying הלל a מצוה דאורייתא or דרבנן? This is a מחלוקת. According to some opinions, it is דאורייתא, and according to others, it is דרבנן. According to those opinions which state that הלל is דאורייתא, what is the source for the מצוה? There are two answers:

1. The פסוק in דברים states: וענתה השירה הזאת. "It shall be that when many evils and distresses come upon it, then this song shall speak up." The מדרש explains: "Hashem declares: When I rescue בני ישראל from dire straits, at that moment they shall sing to Me a song of praise."
2. After בני ישראל sang שירה and praise to Hashem. The פסוק describes: אז יאמרו לאמר "ישיר... ויאמרו לאמר". The ערוגת הבשם explains that the double לשון of "they said, to say"

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teaches that the same principle applies to all future generations: when Hashem performs a miraculous *ישועה*, they, too, should sing to Him in praise.

Check for Understanding: From the list of days on which we say הלל, which occasions reflect the two sources that we just learned?

Practice: Now that we have a basic overview of סדר הלל, we are ready to learn how we can make our praise meaningful. To review, let's summarize the three principles of 'Meaningful Praise' that we learned. *Distribute 'music notes' cutouts to students.* Instruct students to list the three principles on their cards.

Closure: In the following lessons, we will apply each of these rules (summarize aloud) and learn how it is implemented in סדר הלל.

Hallel Unit Lesson II

Objective: Using their notes, students will demonstrate their understanding of the themes of סדר הלל by listing the five references and explaining how each one demonstrates a יסוד in אמונה.

Anticipatory Set: Pass a bag of names around the classroom. Each student draws one paper from the bag; on it is the name of a fellow classmate. Instruct students to write a list of ten praises that come to mind about this classmate. Then, when they have completed their list of ten praises, tell students the following: if you were to write a special card to this classmate, containing three items of praise, which of the ten items that you wrote would you choose? Give students a moment to select those three items, and then prompt them to respond: why did you choose the specific praises that you did? From all the items on your list, what made some of them worthy of being included in your 'special' list? Write responses on the board. Guide students to arrive at the following answers:

- These are the most 'outstanding' attributes of this girl
- From all the praises that I wrote on my original list, these really describe her essence
- While all the praises are nice, these three are really the most unusual and special

Then, present students with various flashcards. Each card contains the location of a פסוק from תהלים that praises Hashem, along with translation if necessary. Students should list the specific praise being noted, and then exchange cards. After all students have completed the various cards, pose the following question:

We see that ספר תהלים is filled with praise for Hashem. From all one hundred fifty פרקים, though, only several were chosen to serve as the סדר הלל – the unique arrangement of special praise for Hashem. Why, specifically, were these פרקים chosen?

Tell the Objective: In this lesson, we will explore the סדר הלל and understand why, specifically, these פרקים were chosen to constitute the 'special praise' of Hashem. By the end of this class, you will be able to list and explain several reasons why these פרקים comprise סדר הלל.

Purpose: Once you know *why* these specific פרקים were chosen, you will have a deeper understanding of what you are saying, your praise will be more 'targeted' – and your הלל will be meaningful!

Input: The גמרא in פסחים asks precisely this question: מאי טעמה אמרינן האי? Why do we specifically say these פרקים?

The גמרא answers: משום שיש בו חמשה דברים. These פרקים contain within them five fundamental praises that are worth being selected as 'special praise,' because they are so primary and central. What are these five things?

1. יציאת מצרים
2. קריעת ים סוף
3. מתן תורה
4. חבלי משיח
5. תחית המתים

To begin with, let us identify where, precisely, these five fundamentals are referenced. Can you find references to any of them throughout the פרקים? Give students a few moments to read through the סדר הלל. Some of the more obvious ones will quickly be apparent to students; others may not be.

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1. יציאת מצרים
בצאת ישראל ממצרים
2. קריעת ים סוף
הים ראה וינס
3. מתן תורה
ההרים רקדו כאלים
At the time of מתן תורה, all the mountains 'danced like rams.'
4. חבלי משיח
חבלי משיח refers to the 'pangs of the coming of משיח' – the events that will shake the world in the times preceding the coming of משיח. This is hinted to in the פסוק of "לא לנו ה' לא לנו". We ask Hashem: "Do it for Your name, Hashem, not for us" – in other words, bring משיח to the world for the sake of Your name.
5. תחית המתים
אתהלך לפני ה' בארצות החיים
What are the multiple 'lands of life' referred to in this פסוק? We infer from here about תחית המתים, which is the second stage of 'living.'

Now, we understand where these five 'fundamentals' are referenced in סדר הלל. But why are these five fundamentals selected as the 'special praise' of Hashem? Let's see if we can relate several of the aforementioned reasons to this concept. להבדיל אלפי הבדלות – obviously, praise for Hashem is in a realm of its own, that cannot even be compared to praising another human being. But we can try to apply the 'principle' behind the praise to סדר הלל.

Before, we stated that one of the factors that might cause you to select certain praises is that "these are the outstanding attributes," or "these describe the essence." Indeed, these five 'fundamentals' are essentials: they encapsulate the 'essential' of our אמונה. They are the primary facets that we know about Hashem and they are the main aspects that deserve praise. The מהרש"א explains:

אלו החמשה הם כוללים העקריות... יציאת מצרים וקריעת ים סוף מורים על מציאותו וחדוש עולם, מתן תורה מורה על תורה מן השמים, תחית המתים (מובן מאליו)... וחבלי משיח מורה על שכר ועונש.

By praising these five things, we are acknowledging and testifying to the tenets of our אמונה. The first tenet is that Hashem created the world, renews nature constantly, and wields all power over the natural order of the world. This is manifest in יציאת מצרים and קריעת ים סוף. The second יסוד is our אמונה in תורה – we believe that our Torah is divine, and that the תורה that we have today was given to us at הר סיני. This is expressed in the descriptions of מתן תורה. Another יסוד of our אמונה is that there will be a צדקה; this is described in the פסוק of בארצות החיים... אתהלך. Finally, as Jews we firmly believe that there is a precise measure of שכר ועונש: those who do מצוות will ultimately be rewarded, and evildoers will eventually be punished. This principle will become obvious during the חבלי משיח, when Hashem will reveal Himself, punish the רשעים, and reward the צדיקים.

Model and Example: In fact, we can see that many of the מאמין's that we say each day can be directly correlated to the phrases of הלל. For example: each day we say הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים "אני מאמין... הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים" As we explained, this is clearly demonstrated in יציאת מצרים and קריעת ים סוף. The fact that Hashem totally overturned nature, demonstrates that He created and controls it.

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Check for Understanding: Can you find other מאמין's that express the עקרims that we discussed, and state which phrase of הלל they relate to?

The question must be clarified, though: why do these יסודות constitute הלל? Is this a סדר of ביהדות, or a סדר of praise?

Model and Example: A neglected baby was rescued from an orphanage by a kind woman. This woman took the baby home and treated her as if she was her own. She tended to all of her needs, bought her clothing, provided for her education, and gave her the best of everything. The girl grew up in her foster home, lavished with love and care. As the years passed, her foster parents doted on her and bought her everything she might need. On the day before her חתונה, she sat down to write the kind woman a letter. Now, what do you imagine that this letter contained? Consider the following statements. For each one, respond whether you think that sentence would be in her letter:

- Thank you for the Shabbos shoes you bought me.
- You always cared for me as if I was your own.
- You rescued me when I was a baby.
- You bought me such nice dresses.
- You went to all my PTA meetings.
- You paid for all my expenses.
- I know that you will continue to be there for me.

Obviously, all of these items are true, and surely the mother deserves praise for each of them. But, on a special occasion, on a card of 'special thanks and praise,' the 'big things' are recorded. This does not mean that other items are insignificant. Every small detail must be recognized and appreciated. But this card is written on a significant occasion: the day before her חתונה. Surely, on a 'special card' of praise, she will recount the large, significant events that merit thanks.

Similarly, these יסודות that we mention actually reflect our history and our relationship with Hashem. Hashem took us out of מצרים. He split the sea for us. He gave us the Torah. In the future, we know that He will bring משיח and perform תחיית המתים. These are the 'big things' that we write on our 'card' of thanks and praise. We recite הלל on 'special occasions.' Of course, we thank and praise Hashem every day. But on this 'special card' of praise, we recount the large, significant events that merit thanks.

Practice: On the board, list the "חמשה דברים" delineated in the גמרא. Instruct students to write where each one is referenced in הלל, and explain which יסוד האמונה it corresponds to. Note that this can be done in the form of a chart.

Closure: So far, we have discussed two of our principles of 'meaningful praise.' We have learned the importance of understanding what we are saying, and now we have learned about how the סדר הלל is targeted to address the primary events and יסודות that require praise. In the next class, we will discuss the third principle: reserving special praise for special occasions.

Hallel Unit Lesson III

Part One:

Objective: With partners, students will demonstrate their understanding that all of nature is truly miraculous by listing several 'daily miracles' that they have experienced and explaining why we don't always recognize that these natural events are, in fact, דִּסִּים.

Anticipatory Set: We know that חנוכה commemorates the great miracle that Hashem performed with the oil. However, there truly was enough oil to last for one day, and so in fact the miracle of the oil lasted for seven days. Why, then, do we celebrate חנוכה for eight days? *Prompt students to share their answers; doubtless, they have learned many. Assume that the response that is the focus of our lesson will be supplied, and if so validate all answers but conclude by saying that, "let us now focus on this specific answer."* Otherwise, supply the following answer:

We all recognize that the fact that the שֶׁמֶן lasted for those extra seven days, when in fact it was a very small quantity that should only have lasted for one day, is a miracle. Yet, the very fact that oil fuels fire is a דִּסִּים, in and of itself! So we celebrate חנוכה for the first, original day as well – because we are recognizing and thanking Hashem for the miracles of nature! **We must recognize that what we deem 'natural' and expected is also miraculous, and cause for appreciation and even celebration.**

Tell the Objective: In today's lesson, we will learn about the miracles in nature. By the end of today's class, you will have a heightened appreciation for the דִּסִּים that you experience on a regular basis, and you will be able to explain why we make the mistake of perceiving them as 'natural' and expected.

Purpose: Then, you will truly understand why we celebrate eight days of Chanukah – and you will further find cause for celebration every day of your life, when you experience 'natural' דִּסִּים!

Input: When you wake up in the morning and open your eyes, you can see light streaming in the window. You can see your siblings in the kitchen getting ready for school; you can see the cereal and milk sitting on the counter. You can see your reflection in the mirror as you fix your hair. You can see what is directly in front of you, and without turning your head you can even see what is on the side of you! Now, how much thought do you devote to that fact? Do you wake up in the morning and gallop down the stairs, shouting to all of your family: "A דִּסִּים! I just woke up and there is a tremendous miracle! I have these two small circles on my face, and somehow they take in the light and send a message to my brain and I can see! What a wonder! What a miracle!" Most of us do not behave in that manner. Most of us do not even think about the fact that we can see! And, if we do actually pause for a minute to think about it, we don't think that it is a miracle! We just think, "Oh – this is natural. This is normal. This is just the way nature works; I have two eyes and they can see."

What is going on here? There is a tremendous miracle occurring, and yet we are perceiving it as natural – as regular. Hashem is performing a wonder – but we are not even recognizing that it is

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coming from Hashem! We are attributing it to nature! Truly, this is the way that nature works. Nature is like a mask that “hides” Hashem. Even though it is really Hashem who is causing all of these miracles to happen, we are not always aware that it is Hashem. Nature masks Hashem and makes us lose our awareness and appreciation of His miracles.

Model and Example: R’ Shimshon Dovid Pincus explains: Let’s say a person observes a car driving down the street. He sees the wheels revolving, propelling the vehicle forward. We ask him, “What makes the wheels move?” He answers, “It’s very simple. I see how it works. The gas pedal and the steering wheel do it. Through their repeated movements, they push the wheels. The driver presses on the gas pedal, and he turns the steering wheel right and left, and then the wheels revolve!”

This is foolish, of course. Everyone knows that a car’s power comes from the motor, not from the pumping motion of the gas pedal. A car without a motor will not go, no matter how furiously the driver pumps the gas pedal and turns the steering wheel. Yet, in theory, a person could drive a car for years without even knowing about the existence of the motor. This is because the motor is hidden. It is under the hood. (Nefesh Shimshon).

This is similar to the way that nature works. Truly, Hashem is the one who is constantly recreating nature in a miraculous fashion. However, we can mistakenly perceive things as being caused simply by “nature.” We can fail to recognize Hashem and His miracles in what we see, and instead we can attribute things to “nature” and consider that which is truly miraculous to be “normal,” “predictable,” “expected,” “regular,”... in other words, completely natural!

Check for Understanding: Can you explain the משל here in your own words? Who is the ‘Engine’? And what is the ‘hood’?

Of course, when there is a blatant miracle, then we all recognize that it is from Hashem. For example, when Hashem performs a miraculous ישועה, when someone miraculously recovers from an illness, when world events show a miraculous protection for ישראל... then we all recognize that the נס is directly from Hashem. But when we look at nature, we don’t always realize that it is truly miraculous, and that it is directly from Hashem! We are like the people who look at the car, and see the wheels turning... without thinking about the motor underneath. Hashem is the “motor” that is really powering and causing nature. But we don’t always recognize that!

חז"ל tell us that the word עולם, which means world, is derived from the same שרש as the word "העלים". What does "העלים" mean? It means hidden, secreted – out of sight. The world – the עולם – is essentially a mask that hides Hashem’s presence. Hashem does not reveal Himself openly; rather, He hides beneath the “hood” of nature. The world of nature allows one to forget that Hashem is really the one in control. Rather than attributing everything that we see – grass blades

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growing, sun shining, and raindrops falling – to Hashem, we can make the mistake of attributing it all to nature.

Why? Hashem does this in order to give us a chance to “earn” our אמונה. If Hashem’s presence was so blatantly clear, and He performed outright נסים every few moments, then there would be no challenge in developing אמונה. It would be impossible *not* to recognize Hashem’s presence and control over the world! Therefore, Hashem wears a “mask.” This mask of טבע allows one to forget, at times, that Hashem is the one who is in control of every aspect of the world. Rather than realizing that it is Hashem’s power that makes the grass grow and the rain fall, one can mistakenly attribute these happenings to the forces of “nature.”

The word טבע comes from the same root as the word לטבע. What does לטבע mean? It means to drown. This is because טבע has the ability to “drown out” our awareness of Hashem. Our awareness of Hashem and His might can be drowned in the regular patterns of nature.

On the other hand, the word טבע also shares a root with the word מטבע. A מטבע is a coin. If you think about the way a coin is made, you’ll notice that every coin has the “stamp” or insignia of a significant ruler or leader embossed on its surface. So, too, nature essentially has the imprint of Hashem embossed on it. That is, if you look closely enough, you can find the “stamp” of Hashem on nature! If you truly think about nature, you will recognize in it the miracles that are the insignia of no force other than Hashem.

This shows us that nature has two aspects. Nature can either make us lose our awareness of Hashem, or nature can do the opposite – it can provide us with opportunities for increasing our awareness of Hashem and His might! It all depends on us: what is our perspective when we look at nature? Are we like the inexperienced novices in the art gallery, or are we like the educated mavens?

R’ Dessler gives an example that illustrates this. Imagine a man who goes to the בית החיים to visit the קבר of his Rebbe. As he is walking amongst the stone מצבות, he notices that one מצבה is trembling and the earth around it is quaking. Suddenly, the מצבה topples to the floor and the earth beneath it shudders... as slowly, a man arises from the grave. What would be the reaction? The man would recoil in shock. He would rub his eyes in disbelief. His heart pounding, he would exclaim: “What a wonder! Miracle of miracles! I have just witnessed an awesome sight – תחית והמתים!”

Have you ever witnessed such a miraculous phenomenon? Surely not, you say. Yet, R’ Dessler explains that in truth, you witness this miracle daily! Have you ever seen a plant poking its head out of the earth? A flower peeking out of the soil? Think about what’s going on here. A little seed is planted deep in the soil. It seems to be inanimate – wooden – dead. And suddenly, the seed awakens. In the moist, soft earth, it slowly comes to life. It spreads roots... climbs upwards... and breaks the surface of the soil. Why don’t we recoil in shock? Why don’t we rub our eyes in

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disbelief? Why don't we exclaim, with pounding hearts – “What a wonder! Miracle of miracles! I have just witnessed an awesome sight!”

Check for Understanding: Can you pinpoint what is the essential difference? Why do we recognize large, blatant נסים, but fail to recognize the miracles in nature?

R' Dessler explains: because we get accustomed to the miracles of nature, we don't recognize them as נסים. Since we see these miracles happen on a daily basis – since we've seen these miracles happen so many times – we are not amazed by it.

Model and Example: Imagine if you would come into school one morning and there would be a colorful, dazzling banner hanging across the building. All the students would stop to stare. And maybe the next morning, and even the third morning, students would still stop to look at the banner. But after a few weeks, the banner wouldn't stop anyone in their tracks. All the students would be so used to it, that they would barely even notice that it's there. The miracles of nature are like a bright, dazzling banner – true נסים! But, because we see them every day, we get so used to them and we neglect to even think about them.

Really, the only difference between what we call nature – טבע – and נס, is the frequency with which it occurs. Is there really such a difference in the degree of נס and ה' יד involved in a seed growing, and תחית המתים? No. Yet, we refer to the seed growing as טבע, nature, and תחית המתים as a נס. What is the fundamental difference? The answer is: a seed growing occurs frequently, on a regular basis, and תחית המתים obviously does not.

In other words – all of טבע is actually a נס! Essentially, there is no such thing as טבע... there are only frequent, daily, “hidden” נסים, and infrequent, blatant, outright נסים! In fact, the רמב"ן tells us:

"אין לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקורינו כולם נסים אין בהם דרך טבע ומנהגו של עולם..."

A person is not considered to have a part in the חלק of כלל ישראל and תורה – until he believes that everything that happens to us, as members of כלל ישראל, is a נס – there is no aspect of our lives that is “nature” and “just the way the world runs”!

Everything is essentially a נס; the only difference is whether it's a נס that we've already become accustomed to, or whether it's a rare נס. It is our challenge to recognize that the frequent, routine נסים are truly miraculous, and not “natural”.

Hashem hides Himself in nature in order to give us the challenge of developing our אמונה. But in order to assist us in achieving this אמונה and recognizing that He is in control, Hashem sometimes “peeks out” from the mask of טבע and performs an outright, blatant miracle. The goal of these נסים is to inspire us with אמונה, so that we will recognize Hashem even when He once again “dons the mask” of nature. In other words: Hashem does large נסים in order to help us face the

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challenge of recognizing Him in smaller, frequent נסים – to help us face the challenge of recognizing Him in טבע!

Model and Example: The following משל illustrates this point: your class is having a costume party. Everyone must show up to the party in a costume that disguises them very well. The activity of the party will be to try to identify your friends. You show up at the party, and you're sitting near your best friend... but she doesn't even recognize you! She is sitting right next to you, but she doesn't even realize that it's you beneath the mask! You know that you can't take off your costume; after all, the point of the party is that you have to recognize your friends despite their disguise! But, you want to help your friend out – you want to give her a bit of a “head-start” in the game. So for just a second, you quickly peel back your mask and let her catch a glimpse of your face. Then you quickly put the mask back on. But now, since she's seen your face beneath the mask, your friend will be able to find you in the crowd, despite your disguise.

Check for Understanding: Explain in your own words how this analogy relates to Hashem and nature.

The נצי"ב gives another משל. Nature is like darkness; it is hard to perceive things in the dark and clearly see Hashem. So, what does Hashem do? Once in a while Hashem performs a large, blatant נס that is clearly different from the pattern of טבע. This נס is like lightening in the darkness – all of a sudden there is a flash that lights up the sky. All of a sudden you can see things clearly – and you can keep that image before your eyes once the darkness descends again.

The large נסים are like “peeking beneath the mask” or “a flash of lightening”. Their goal is to inspire us with אמונה so we can continue to recognize Hashem, even within the regular patterns of טבע.

Model and Example: Recently, we have witnessed tremendous miracles as Hashem protected עם ישראל from our enemies in ארץ ישראל. Countless stabbing attacks and plots were foiled. This נס was supposed to give us a heightened אמונה in Hashem. Then, once we have received this increased אמונה, we can recognize that all the regular, “natural” patterns of current events are really also נסים from Hashem. Or, perhaps, a family witnessed a tremendous נס as a family member was miraculously healed from a dreadful illness, in a totally supernatural way. This נס was supposed to give them a heightened אמונה in Hashem. Then, they could continue to recognize Hashem even in the normal, natural routines of their lives. As the רמב"ן says:

"ומן הנסים הגדולים והמפורסמים אתה מודה בנסים הנסתרים..."

From the large, famous, blatant נסים, you come to recognize the hidden נסים. The אמונה that you get from witnessing or hearing about open נסים helps you recognize that the routine, frequent events that we call nature are truly miracles, as well. Do you remember our earlier example with the car's motor? The large, outright נס is almost like having the hood of the car pop up, exposing the motor. Then, once you've actually caught a glimpse of the motor, you'll know that the motor

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is what's powering the wheels of the car and making it go... even once the hood is back down! Similarly, the מהר"ל writes:

"ונתנו טעם בנסים שהם מורים על מעשה ה', שלכך נקרא אות ומופת, שהם אות ומופת על מעשה ה' הנורא... שעיקר מה שהביאם לעולם הוא יתברך להחזיק המאמינים בו."

Practice: Students are given five minutes to work with a partner and list as many daily miracles that they have personally experienced within the past week, as they can think of. This can be formatted as a game, in which students race to come up with the most items on their list. Then, students should write a brief summary of *why* we mistakenly perceive these miracles as natural.

Closure: In this lesson, we have explored how all of nature is truly miraculous. In the next class, we will take this lesson one step further and apply it to our lessons on הלל.

Part Two:

Objective: Using their סידורים, students will demonstrate their understanding of how and when to praise Hashem by listing praises for outright נסים, and praises for daily נסים, and explaining which praises should be said when.

Anticipatory Set: Instruct students to retrieve the lists that they wrote at the end of the previous lesson. Collect a sampling of 'miracles' that students wrote, and list them on the board. Then, pose the following question:

We know that we say הלל in order to praise and thank Hashem for great נסים. We also know, as we learned in last class, that all of these items that we listed here, are truly miraculous! So... did you say הלל on the days that you experienced these נסים?

Why not? *Allow a moment for students to contemplate this question.*

Post the following two מאמרי חז"ל on the board:

- אמר ר' יוסי: יהא חלקי מגומרי הלל בכל יום
- הגומר הלל בכל יום הרי זה מחרף ומגדף

After providing a basic translation, ask students to identify the seeming contradiction between the two statements. Then, summarize the question: should we, in fact, be saying הלל on a daily basis, in order to thank Hashem for daily miracles? Or is הלל only for special occasions – and if so, why?

Tell the Objective: In this class, we will delve deeper into the purpose of large, blatant נסים, and we will further explore the way in which we are supposed to praise Hashem. By the end of today's class, you will be able to differentiate when we are supposed to say הלל, and when we are supposed to thank Hashem through other praises.

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Purpose: Then, we will be able to properly thank and praise Hashem – both for the large, outright נסים, as well as for the ‘small miracles’ that we experience on a daily basis.

Input: Firstly, let’s explore the origins of הלל, and see when it was originally said. The גמרא lists several occasions throughout our history when הלל was recited.

1. קריעת ים סוף and משה רבינו said הלל when they emerged safely after.
2. יהושע and בני ישראל said הלל when all the kings of כנען gathered against them.
3. דבורה and ברק said הלל when they were threatened by סיסרא.
4. מלך חזקיהו and his court said הלל when they were threatened by אשור.
5. נבוכדנצר said הלל when they were threatened by חנניה, משאל, ועזריה.

We see here that הלל was recited when people were rescued from situations of grave peril; when they sought and experienced a miraculous ישועה from ה'. Furthermore, let’s review the two מקורות for the מצוה of הלל that we discussed at the start of this unit; we will see how those two sources also point to the fact that הלל is said on the occasion of great, miraculous ישועות.

1. The פסוק in דברים states: “והיה כי תמצאן אותו רעות רבות וצרות וענתה השירה הזאת. “It shall be that when many evils and distresses come upon it, then this song shall speak up.” The מדרש explains: “Hashem declares: When I rescue בני ישראל from dire straits, at that moment they shall sing to Me a song of praise.”
2. After בני ישראל sang שירה and praise to Hashem. The פסוק describes: אז יאמרו לאמר... ישיר.” The ערוגת הבשם explains that the double לשון of “they said, to say” teaches that the same principle applies to all future generations: when Hashem performs a miraculous ישועה, they, too, should sing to Him in praise.

The commentaries on the גמרא write that “Hallel is recited to publicize the miracles that Hashem performed for us... the main purpose of Hallel is to joyously spread the word of the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed for us.” (Insert source – תלמידי רבינו יונה) In fact, the שבולי explains that we stand when we recite הלל, because the purpose of הלל is to ‘testify’ to the greatness of Hashem regarding the נסים that He performed for us – and witnesses must stand when they provide testimony. The גמרא actually states that the obligation for reciting הלל is נסא פרסומי נסא – publicizing the miracles that Hashem has performed.

Now, let’s return to our previous question: why don’t we recite הלל on a daily basis, to thank Hashem for all the natural miracles that we experience? In fact, from the גמרא that we read earlier, it seems that it is actually *wrong* to say הלל on a daily basis!

הגומר הלל בכל יום הרי זה מחרף ומגדף

The מפרשים explain that one who says הלל on a daily basis, actually reduces his אמונה and brings בזיון, rather than praise, to ה'. שם ה'. How? By reciting הלל daily, he treats the praise as something ‘routine’ and ‘regular.’ In other words, he is reducing it from its status as ‘praise for special occasions.’ He is making it

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ordinary and regular. In essence, he is saying: “there’s nothing special about all this! It’s just regular, daily thanks.”

Model and Example: Imagine that you purchased a special gown for your sister’s wedding. Would your mother allow you to wear that gown as a weekday outfit? Obviously not. What would be wrong with doing that? You would be cheapening the value of the gown; you would be saying that it’s not representative of special occasions, and that it may as well be worn on a daily basis. In fact, you are actually cheapening the value of the occasion, itself – because you are saying that the gown that can be worn to that wedding, can also be worn during the week!

Check for Understanding: Explain in your own words how saying הלל every day ‘cheapens the value of the occasion.’

Model and Example: As another example, imagine what would happen if you entered your house and found the dining room table bedecked in crystal and finest china. Obviously, you would immediately know that something special is coming up – perhaps it is ערב יום טוב. But what would be if every day, when you came home from school, your table was set like that? The value of the crystal and china would be cheapened; they would no longer represent ‘special occasions.’ Essentially, you would be saying: “there’s nothing out of the ordinary about crystal, china, and silver!”

הלל was established by חז"ל to be said on ‘special occasions.’ It is intended to mark unusual, fantastic revelations of יד ה', and recounts great ישועות and נסים. By saying הלל on a daily basis, we would make it sound as if these great ישועות are ‘nothing special.’ Therefore, we must reserve הלל for the special occasions that the חכמים specifically listed.

Why? What is the purpose of recounting these great נסים? Talking about the great נסים that Hashem performs heightens our אמונה. It also helps us recognize the daily נסים that we experience, as we discussed in our previous class. *Prompt students to review.*

As the רמב"ן writes:

"ומן הנסים הגדולים והמפורסמים אתה מודה בנסים הנסתרים..."

By celebrating these special occasions and reminding ourselves of the great נסים through saying הלל, we will heighten our awareness of Hashem’s might and we will recognize the daily miracles that we experience. In fact, it is interesting that the very סדר of הלל, which as we said is intended to mark the ‘big, blatant נסים’, actually begins with the words: ממזרח שמש עד מבוא, מהולל שם ה'. The special סדר of praise for all the great נסים and ישועות begins with a reference to sunrise and sunset, indicating that this, too, is a miracle worthy of praise!

Still, the fact is that the great miracles described in הלל are not every day occurrences; they are rare, special occasions when יד ה' is revealed, and that is why הלל must only be said on special occasions. These great occasions are like the ‘flashes of lightening in the sky,’ or ‘when the hood of the car pops up to expose the engine.’ By marking these occasions as special, we enable them

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to serve their purpose as reminders. If we would cheapen them, and get 'used' to הלל, then it would lose its specialness and we would not be able to draw the same אמונה from it.

So then, how can we thank and praise Hashem for the daily miracles? Let's take another look at the חז"ל that we mentioned earlier: אמר ר' יוסי: יהא חלקי מגומרי הלל בכל יום. This seems puzzling; after all, we just finished discussing that we may not say הלל on a daily basis! In fact, though, ר' יוסי was not talking about the סדר הלל. He was talking about a different set of praises. What series of praise do we say on a daily basis, thanking Hashem for all the miracles that He constantly performs for us? *Prompt students to respond.*

This הלל refers to פסוקי דזמרה. *Instruct students to take out their סידורים and open up to פסוקי דזמרה.* How many 'natural miracles' can you find throughout these paragraphs? *Write responses on the board.*

Every day, we have the opportunity to be "גומרי הלל" – to thank and praise Hashem for the miracles that He performs. Then, throughout the year, we are given special occasions that serve as 'boosters' for our אמונה; they give us an increased dosage of awareness for Hashem's fantastic נסים.

Practice: Using your סידור, list ten praises from הלל that reference large, outright נסים. Then, list ten praises from פסוקי דזמרה that reference daily, 'natural' miracles. Finally, write a brief explanation of when we say each list, and why.

Closure: Can you explain how חנוכה teaches us about outright, blatant נסים, as well as small, hidden נסים? Let's summarize how on חנוכה, we celebrate *both* forms of miracles.