living a life of exile and hardship. Thousands of our brethren forfeited their Judaism this way. Unfortunately, those Jews lived "for naught." However, the myriads of acheinu Bnei Yisrael who gave up their lives al kiddush Hashem proved thereby that their emunah was indeed בָּלֶבֶב שֻׁלָם.

על שֶׁאֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ is, as we said, the refrain that is common to all of the above expressions of hoda'ah, and was originally added to each one of them.

After quoting the aforementioned five expressions of hoda'ah, the Gemara concludes by saying, אָמֵר רֵב פָּפָּא: הִילְבֶּךְ נֵימְרִינְהוּ לְכוּלְּהוּ, Rav Pappa said: We say them all (Sotah 40a). Therefore, our present-day version of this communal מוֹרִים includes, with slight textual variations, all five of these expressions of hoda'ah. And since this מוֹרִים consists of various expressions of hoda'ah which were composed by different rabbanan, as set forth in the Gemara, it is commonly known as חֵרִים דְּרַבְּנָן Modim d'Rabbanan.

We conclude פָּרוּף אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת with בָּרוּף אֵל הַהוּדָאוֹת. We call HaKadosh Baruch Hu the God of Thanksgiving, because, as we explained earlier, He instilled in us the entire concept of thanksgiving, עַל שֶׁנְּתַהָּ בְּלְבֵּנוּ לִהְיוֹת דְּבוּקִים בְּךְ וּמוֹדִים עַל שֻׁנָּתַהָּ בְּלְבֵּנוּ לִהְיוֹת דְּבוּקִים בְּךְ וּמוֹדִים.

In the opinion of the Vilna Gaon, this מוֹדִים should conclude with the full berachah, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת. However, we follow the opinion of Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 127) that it should end with only בָּרוּךְ אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת. The difference of these two opinions is based on a dispute among the Rishonim, and therefore, in practice, as it is a safek berachah, we conclude with only שִׁרוּרְ אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת.

על הַנְּסִים ₃ / Al HaNissim

A D'var Torah on Purim

[Ed. note: This *shiur* was given just before Purim, so the Rav included the following remarks regarding Purim, following his custom of talking about current Yamim Tovim in his lectures and speeches.]

ת Purim, in על הַנָּסִים, we add the piece פּימֵי מָרְדְּכֵי וְאֶסְתֵּר as our hoda'ah for the nissim that occurred at that time. A brief synopsis of the historical events surrounding Purim is included there, and it ends with the death of Haman: וְתָלוּ אוֹתוֹ וְאֶת בָּנִיו עַל הָעֵץ, They hanged him and his sons on a tree. This "tree" gives us no rest; it is mentioned in the Megillah several times. Let us try to find its underlying significance in the story of Purim.

The tree on which Haman was hanged was actually a gallows, and it is described in the *Megillah* as being fifty *amos* high (*Esther* 7:9), which was the Persian custom for executions of important people.

According to the *Megillah*, only Haman died by hanging, and his execution took place approximately on the sixteenth of Nissan. His sons, however, were killed by the sword in the capital city of Shushan one year later on the thirteenth of Adar, when the Jews rose up and killed their enemies. And on the next day, the fourteenth of Adar, in accordance with the request of Esther, the bodies of the ten sons of Haman were hanged from the tree (see *Esther* 9:6-14). Our *Chachamim* make a point of telling us that their dead bodies were hanged on the same tree, one underneath the other, together with the body of Haman (see *Targum*, *Megillas Esther* 9:14; *Megillah* 16b). This, despite the fact that Haman had died nearly one year earlier! We even mention this tree on Chanukah in *Maoz Tzur*: אור מון ליינינין על העץ הלית קלית וועל העץ הלית placed such importance on this tree.

l would like to suggest that it has its origin in the statement: הָמָן מֵן הַתּוֹרָה, Where does Haman appear in the Torah (Chullin 139b). And the answer given there is that HaKadosh Baruch Hu asked Adam HaRishon after he had eaten of the eitz hadaas, when he realized that he was naked, הֲמִן הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר, Did you eat of the tree which I commanded you not to eat? (Bereishis 3:11). Taken simply, this means that in this narrative, the letters of הָמִן מִן הַתּוֹרָה are identical with הַמִן, and this is the source of הָמִן מִן הַתּוֹרָה lt is obvious, however, that this statement of our Chachamim has a much deeper meaning.

The most heinous crime imaginable is genocide, the murder of an entire class or race of people — men, women, and children. And the most egregious form of genocide is when it is practiced against *Klal Yisrael*, as was attempted by Haman. This is the most profound *aveirah* that anyone could ever contemplate, as was done by Hitler, ימ"ש, in his "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem."

And conversely, the smallest, slightest aveirah — which is almost no aveirah — is that which was done when Adam and Chavah ate of the eitz hadaas. In enticing them to eat of the forbidden tree, the serpent told them that if they would eat it, they would "become like God": מוֹב וָּדֶע, And you will be like God, knowing good and bad (ibid. v. 5). The desire of Adam and Chavah to eat the fruit of this tree was not one of simple animal lust — as sensual aveiros usually are — but rather, it was a desire to raise themselves up toward the level of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Nevertheless, it was an aveirah because HaKadosh Baruch Hu forbade them to eat the fruit of this tree, and they did not use their moral freedom of choice to decide to abide by the will of God. Rather, they succumbed to the appeal which the

fruit had to their senses — albeit a lofty appeal. We may therefore conclude that this was the most exalted form of an *aveirah* ever committed.

The yetzer hara, in the form of the nachash, wanted to entice Adam and Chavah to "become like God." And when they succumbed to this desire, they committed the first aveirah. All other aveiros of the human race are the result of this aveirah, because once one violates the will of God and experiences the "sweet taste" of sin, he has the desire to continue to do so. Consequently, Adam and Chavah, after their cheit, had the continuing desire for aveiros, and this was inherited by the human race.

The desire for the most idealistic aveirah — to become like HaKadosh Baruch Hu — which was committed by Adam and Chavah, escalated in their offspring, step by step, until it eventually reached the worst of all sins, that which was contemplated by Haman: לְּהַשְּׁמִיד לָהֲרֵג וּלְאַבֵּד אָת בָּל הַיְּחוּרִים וגוי, To destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all the Jews (Esther 3:13). The worst aveirah has its origin in the slightest aveirah. And this is what our Chazal meant when they said, הַמֵּן הַ הַמִּן הַעִּץ.

Therefore, one could say that נְיָלוּ אַוֹחוּ וְאֶת בָּנָיו עֵל הָעֵץ, And they hanged him and his sons on the gallows (Esther 9:25), symbolically conveys the idea that the wickedness of Haman and his sons is attributable to the "tree." With this thought, we can readily understand the importance of this μ which is so prominent in the story of Purim.

בְּרְכַּת כֹּהַנִים – שָׁלוֹם

The third and final berachah of the last part of Shemoneh Esrei is שִׁים שֶׁלוֹם. It is called שַּׁרְבַּת בֹּהְנִים by our Chachamim — although the Priestly Blessing is recited in the Shemoneh Esrei only in the chazzan's repetition — for the reason that we will explain.

The mitzvas asei of Bircas Kohanim is: וְדַבֶּר הֹי אֶל מֹשֶה לֵּאמר: דַּבֶּר אֶל אַהָּר לַּהָּם הֹיִ תְבָּרְבוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל אָמוֹר לָהֶם , Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, Speak to Aharon and his sons, saying: So shall you bless the Children of Israel, say to them (Bamidbar 6:22-23). This mitzvah requires the Kohanim to bless the Jewish people with the following three pesukim: יְבָּרֶךְּ הִי וְיִשְׁמְרֶּךְ הִי וְיִשְׁמְרֶּךְ הִי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךְ הִי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךְ הִי וְנָשְׁמְרֶךְ הִי וְנָשְׁמְרֶךְ הִי וְנָשְׁמְרֶךְ וִיחֻנֶּךְ וְיִחֻנֶּךְ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךְ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךְ וְיִשְׁתְ לְּבְּרְ וְיִשְׁתְּלֶרְ וְיִשְׁתְ לְּבְּרְ וִישְׁרֶבְּר הִי בְּנֵיוֹ אֵלֶיךְ וְיִשְׁתְ לְּבְּר וְיִשְׁתְּלֶרְ וְיִשְׁתְ לְּבְּר וְיִשְׁתְ לְּבְּר וְיִשְׁתְ לְבְּרְ וְיִשְׁתְ לְּבְר וְיִשְׁתְ לְבְּר וְיִשְׁת לְבְּר וְיִבְּר בְּת אַלוֹם לְבְּנִי יִשְׁרְאֵל בְּבְר וְבִּבְּר וְבְּבְר וְבְּבָּר וְבְּבְר וְבְּבָּר וְבְּר וְשָׁת לְבְּר וְיִשְׁת לְבְּר וְיִשְׁת לְבְּר וְיִשְׁת לְבְּר וְיִשְׁת לְבְּר וְבִּבְר וְשִׁת לְבְּר וְיִשְׁת לְבְּר וְיִבְּרְבָם לְבִּר וְשִׁת עְלִבְּר וְבְּבָּר וְבְּבְר יִשְׁת וְבִּר בְּבִּר יִשְׁת וְבִּר בְּבְּר יִשְׁת וְבִּר בְּבְר יִשְׁת וְבּר בְּבְר יִשְׁת וְבְּר בְּבְי יִשְׁת וְבִּר בְּבְּי יִשְׁת וְבּר בְּבְי יִשְׁת וְבּר בְּבְי יִשְׁת וְבְּר יִשְׁת וְבּר בְּבְי יִשְׁת וְבְּר בְּם בְּעוֹם בְּבְּר בְּבְּת בְּבְּר בְּבִי יִשְׁת וְבְּב בְּם בְּבְּר יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת וְבְּבְּר בְּיִר בְּבְּר בְּבְי יִיּבְרְיִים בְּעָּת בְּבְּר בְּבְּת בְּבְּר וְיִבּיְת בְּבְי וְישְׁת בְּבְי יִישְׁת בְּבְּר בְיִי בְּבְּר בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְּר בְּבְי וְשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִבְּי בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְי יִשְׁת בְּבְּי בְּבְּבְי יִבְּיְת בְּבְּי בְּבְי יִבְּיִים בְּבְּבְי בְּבְּבְי בְּבְּבְי בְּבְי בְּבְּבְי בְּבְי בְּבְּבְי בְּבְיוּ בְּבְּבְי בְּבְּבְי