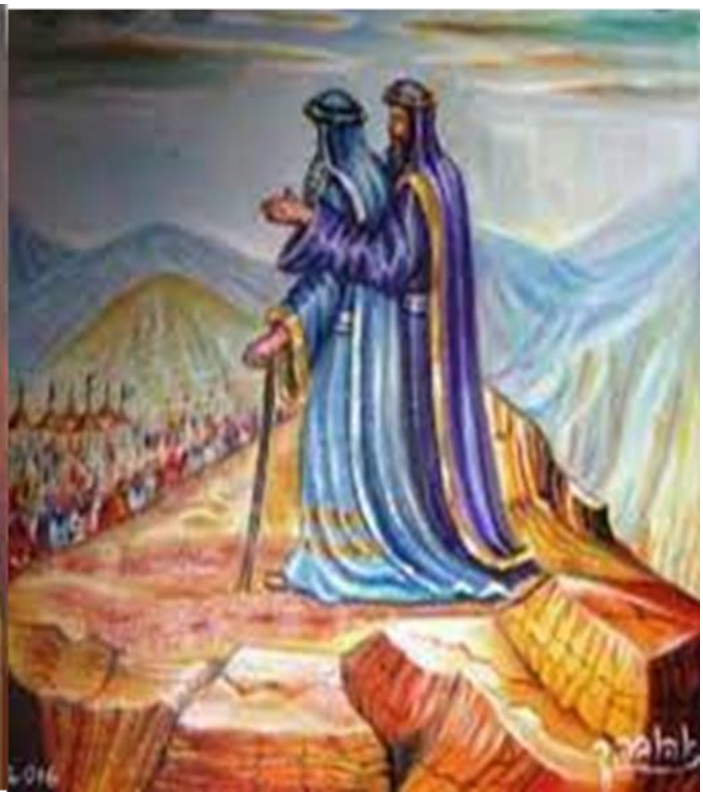
TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry







נצבים

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה

ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה

ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה

ר'יעקב ב"ר שלום הלוי פרידמאן ע"ה

ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה

ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

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נצבים

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ - ***"Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth and in your heart – to do it."*** *(30:14)*

Shouldn't the verse say, "in your heart and in your mouth – to do it"? Doesn't the intention to do a mitzvah ("your heart") preceded the action ("your mouth")?

R' Yisrael Alter z"l (the Gerrer Rebbe) explains: This pasuk is teaching that even if a person has no chaishek [a word that combines the meanings "energy," "feeling" and "motivation"] to pray or study Torah, he should pray and study nevertheless. If necessary, let it first be "in your mouth," and then "in your heart" will follow later.

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת־הָרָע - ***'See, I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil.'*** (30:15)

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l comments on the use of the word "today" in this verse. The significance of this word, he explains, is that each and every day, a person must choose between the two paths that lay in front of him: the way of good (learning Torah and doing mitzvot) and the way of evil (forsaking the Torah and mitzvot).

If he has not been going in the ways of Torah and mitzvot until now, he must start from now on to choose the correct path.

Moreover, even a person who has been going in the ways of Hashem until now should not rest, thinking that he will automatically and effortlessly continue in the way that he has been going. One should not trust in himself to continue as he has been. Therefore, "today" – every single day – a person must choose between the good and the bad that are before him. (Darash Moshe)

R'Tzaddok Hakohen z"l (1823-1900; rebbe of Lublin) traveled extensively in his youth. In his old age, he related the following story which demonstrated his determination to learn from every experience how to serve Hashem better:

I was once traveling when I saw a father and son walking together. Their appearance bespoke extreme hunger, and they clearly were near the end of their strength. Suddenly, the father saw a glint in the mud of the road. It was a small coin. He asked his son to bend and lift it, but the son thought it was too little to bother with. He did not want to use his last strength to bend over for such an insignificant sum.

Having no alternative, the father bent down. Then, he struggled to clean and polish the coin. He realized that this coin might buy enough food to save their lives. Having cleaned the coin, he bought 13 fruits with it.

Seeing that his son was starving to death, the father commanded his son to eat the fruits. "No," said the son. "You used your last strength to lift the coin and polish it, while I was too lazy. You eat!"

But the father could not bear his son's suffering, and he devised a strategy to get his son to eat. He told his son, "I have to go to such-and-such a place. You stay here and rest and follow me in about an hour." The father then headed down the road and, once he was out

of sight, he began dropping his fruits along the road. By the time he had gone some distance, all of the fruits were half-buried in the mud on the road.

An hour later, the son came along. Seeing a fruit along the way, it never occurred to him that it was his father's fruit. Instead, he assumed that another traveler had dropped it. Gathering his strength, he bent down to reach the fruit and he cleaned it of the mud that encased it.

A little farther down the road, he saw another fruit. Again, it did not occur to him that it was his father's fruit. And again, he gathered his strength to bend down and to clean the fruit.

Eleven more times, this scene was repeated. If only the boy had bent down once to pick up the coin, he would have felt entitled to a share of the coin that his father found and he would have shared his father's fruit. Then, he would not have had to bend down 13 times to pick up the fruit.

From this I learned, R' Tzaddok concluded, that if one would only overcome his laziness and deal with the challenge that face him initially, he would save a lot of trouble down the road when the challenges are multiplied. This applies as much to serving Hashem as it does to gathering fruit from the road.



וְשַׁבְתָּ עַד־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ - "***You will return until Hashem, your Elokim***." (30:2)

One might think that he is obligated to sin so that he can fulfil the mitzvah of teshuvah. Otherwise, he might go through his entire life without ever performing this mitzvah.

Not so, says **R' Chaim Chizkiyah Medini z"l** (author of the halachic encyclopedia Sdei Chemed; died 1904). Rather, just as our Sages say that one who studies the laws of the Temple service is deemed to have performed the service, so one who studies the laws of teshuvah

is considered to have performed that mitzvah. Thus, even if one never sins, he still can fulfil the commandment to repent.



כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד – *'Rather, the matter is very near to you.'* (30:14)



The term "near" (to you) is relative. One could be standing on top of something, but, if he is unaware of it, the item remains elusive. It could be under him, but, in his mind, it is across the ocean. If one does not know where to look, distance plays no role.

I remember during the sixties when many spiritually lost people went searching for religious meaning and spirituality in the mountains of Tibet. They, of course, returned empty-handed, because they did not know what to look for. Had they understood the meaning of Judaism, they would have realized that they had to go no further than within themselves to discover Hashem. Sadly, their education was sponsored by their unknowing parents who believed the words of their "spiritual" leadership, who often deliberately misled them.

The yetzer hora, evil inclination, is wily. He deceives the individual by allowing him to go through the motions of spiritual searching, but he cleverly points him in the wrong direction.

When Moshe Rabbeinu informed Pharaoh that Hashem had said, "Send forth My People (Shemos 5:2)," Pharaoh's response was, "I do not know Hashem." The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 5:14) expands on this dialogue. Pharaoh told Moshe, "I will research my book of gods which records the name of each nation's deity and get back to you." Pharaoh returned and told Moshe "Hashem is not in my book. He cannot be a bona fide deity."

The Midrash compares their dialogue to a Kohen who traveled outside of his environs. His servant (who was not very astute) went searching for his master. The first place he stopped was at the local cemetery. He called out to the people who were there, "Have you seen my master?" - They replied, "Fool, what would your master be doing in a cemetery?" (A Kohen is not permitted to defile himself and thus may not be within four cubits of a grave.)

The lesson is obvious. Pharaoh searched for Hashem in his book of pagan deities, dead gods, who were made of stone and mortar. Pharaoh symbolizes those who encourage their followers to study Judaism in the museums and history books. It is a dead religion. They would never concede to the verity that our religion is vibrant and our belief is alive, that Hashem is very real and very much a part of our lives.

Every Yid has within him the spark of Yiddishkeit which never becomes extinguished. For various reasons, it might become covered with dross, but this is merely a temporary overlay which does not affect the purity of the spark.

The Chiddushei HaRim, zl, explains that this is the meaning of Hashem's promise to Avraham Avinu, Anochi magen lach, "I will be a shield for you" (Bereishis 15:1). - Regardless of the circumstances, Hashem promises to protect the spark within each individual Jew. Thus, when we recite the blessing Magen Avraham (in Shemoneh Esrai), we refer to this promise: the Shield of Avraham. Every Jew is protected by this spiritual warranty.

At the end of the Second World War, **Horav Eliezer Silver, zl**, received a commission from General Eisenhower to become an officer in the U.S. Army. Thus, he would be able to continue his Vaad Hatzalah, relief and rescue work in the Displaced Persons Camps that housed thousands of Jewish survivors of Hitler's death camps. Rav Silver was a gaon, brilliant Torah scholar, without peer. He was the president of the Agudas HaRabbanim, Conference of Orthodox Rabbis of North America, but saving and sustaining Jewish lives took precedence for him. Among his many activities was the procurement of clothing, shelter, medicine, kosher food and religious paraphernalia for the survivors. He also compiled lists of the Jews who had survived.

Rav Silver could go anywhere, and he did, with the government - issued jeep at his disposal and GI's protecting him wherever he went.

During the time that he spent in Poland searching for survivors, he would attend church every Sunday morning. He entered the church during mass, when everyone was in attendance, walked up to the altar accompanied by his bodyguards, faced the congregation and loudly proclaimed, "Shema Yisrael! Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad!"

They halted their mass in astonishment. What was this Jewish rabbi screaming out? During those few precious moments, Rav Silver scanned the crowd to see which ones – especially the young children – responded to those words. He was acutely aware that many Jewish parents, seeing the end closing in on them, had attempted to save their children by giving them to their Catholic neighbors. These neshamos, were now being raised as devout Catholics.

With his integrity and daring, Rav Silver saved hundreds of souls. These were pure neshamos that had been covered with dross. Once they heard the holy words of the Shema, the words pierced through the defilement and connected with their souls.

Magen Avraham, the Shield of Avraham: Hashem will always protect us. One might conjecture that this applies to young children, but

what about those who are the products of one or two generations of assimilation, of parents and even grandparents whose animus towards Orthodoxy and its adherents is founded in decades long self-loathing and lack of Jewish identity? Do they still have a pure neshamah buried deeply beneath their overt contempt?

Horav Noach Weinberg, zl, relates the following incident. A rebbe who was teaching in a yeshivah high school in Eretz Yisrael was informed by one of the students that his mother was undergoing a surgical procedure – not life-threatening, but surgery nonetheless.

What does a Jewish boy do as he waits in the waiting room? He recites Tehillim. As the boy was moving back and forth saying Tehillim, in walked an old kibbutznik (often non-observant) "What are you doing here?" the man demanded of the boy.

"My mother is having surgery," was the boy's reply.

"I mean what are you doing?" the man asked, sort of agitated.

"I am reciting Tehillim for her recovery" was the boy's answer.

"You are saying Tehillim? Is that why we fought for this country? (reference to the War of Independence 1948 – and probably the subsequent wars). So that a young fellow like you should continue with these archaic, medieval practices? Become a real man; give up your superstitions. Stop with your meshigas. There is a real vibrant world out there that wants nothing to do with your kind. Throw your Tehillim out the window!"

The boy held his ground, looked at the man, and asked, "What brings you here?"

"Oy, I came to pick up my son's body." - "What do you mean?" the boy asked.

"The doctors say that my son is so sick that they are unable to detect any vital signs. As a last-ditch attempt, they are performing surgery, but they are convinced it is useless."

The man sighed, "My son will die. I just came to pick up the body and see to it that he receives a proper burial."

The boy looked at the man and said, "Are you out of your mind? Why are you giving up? Take my Tehillim and pray to Hashem. Pray as if your son's life depends on it – because it does!"

The man was immovable. "You think I would resort to superstition? Never!"

The boy moved over to the other side of the waiting room and continued his Tehillim recitation. An hour later, the surgeon who was performing the man's son's surgery came out and said, "The surgery was a success. Your son will live."

Suddenly the old kibbutznik jumped up, raised his arms, and called out, "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad!"

What happened? The Rosh Yeshivah explains that when the man came to retrieve his son's body he was in a turmoil. He knew that the correct thing to do was to pray to Hashem, but he would not be a hypocrite. All his life he had reneged religion; now was not the time to show that he really cared. He had not davened since he left the cheder in Europe. He had to vent his frustrations on someone – who better than a yeshivah boy who personified everything that he was not? Nonetheless, as evinced by his loud declaration of Shema Yisrael, his neshamah was in gear and working well.

Magen Avraham: The assimilated, secular, bitter, lack- of-identity Jew might vent on us, but it is all frustration with what he/she could have been, and now (they think) it is too late. - It is never too late. That is Hashem's promise

"Always wear a smile. The gift of life will then be yours to give."
~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת־הָרָע. וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים – '***See – that I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil… and you shall choose life***.' (30:15,19)

Some of us think that once one is born into a frum, observant family and educated in a fine Torah-oriented and conducive environment, it is smooth sailing from there. Well – it is not. The choices exist on a daily --almost constant – basis, and one's commitment must be made anew – everyday.

So says **Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl**, in his commentary to the above pasuk: "Hayom – today – each and every day of our lives, the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, attempts to lure us with his guile. Just because he was not successful 'yesterday,' it does not prevent him from trying again 'today.'

The concept of hayom is certainly applicable for one who 'yesterday' did not triumph over the yetzer hora. He must double his efforts today to succeed in quelling his desire for sin." We think that once we have taken the path of frumkeit, traveled the right road and done well, we are literally on cruise control. - Observance does not work that way. We must make the correct choice every day.

The flipside is obvious. If yesterday was not a "good" day, it does not mean that today must follow in yesterday's footsteps. Every new day presents new and greater opportunity for growth – if one is willing to make positive choices.

This is a powerful lesson, but why does it have to be this way? Why should we be relegated to struggle daily to maintain our frumkeit level? Why should our commitment be constantly tested, always in jeopardy of failing? Why should parents live in constant fear that something can go wrong with their "perfect" child?

Simply, we could say that this serves as a medium for gaining reward. The greater the pain – the greater the gain. With the increased difficulty comes the greater schar, reward. I think, however, that

it goes deeper than that. Specifically because religious observance is a daily struggle, man also has a daily opportunity for return. We live in a time when the challenges to frumkeit, both to ourselves and to our children, are constant. Sadly – tragically – we are not guaranteed that the exemplary Torah education which we have provided our children – ourselves – will suffice.

We can hope. We can pray, and we should; when we see the slightest change, we should immediately intervene, but if we do not succeed, we must remember: we always have a tomorrow. Everything has two sides. There is struggle, and there is opportunity. We aspire to succeed in the struggle.

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם רָאשֵׁיכֶם שִׁבְטֵיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל '***You are all standing today, before Hashem, your G-d.***' (29:9)

Much has been written today concerning the meaning of the above pasuk. What is the significance of the nation's "standing" before Hashem? Also, why enumerate them according to class: leaders, elders, officers, men, women, children, and converts?

Horav Karlinstein quotes the halachah that during those parts of the davening when one must stand, he must stand freely. This means that if he leans against something, such as a shtender, lectern, to the point that if it were to be removed he would fall over, it is not considered standing. This is considered leaning.

Rav Karlinstein derives an important lesson concerning parenting and education from this halachah. It is important that we impart to our children the lessons of life and give them the skills and tools to manoeuvre past the challenges and vicissitudes which they will confront throughout their lives. We want them to rely on us, but not to the point that if we – the support system – is removed, they will fall on their faces.

The goal of a parent and a mechanech, educator, should be to place the child/student firmly on the ground, with the ability to address and deal with the various situations that arise.

This is the underlying meaning of nitzavim, standing. We should aspire to build a nation whereby each individual person – regardless of class – fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, young and old, scholar and simple Jew – all stand independently before Hashem.

Every Jew is blessed with his own unique talents, personality, skills and emotions. We should use them to the best of our ability to serve Hashem.



אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם - '***You are all standing today***.' (29:9)

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, posits that nitzavim, standing, has a deeper meaning, beyond describing Klal Yisrael's vertical position as Moshe Rabbeinu delivered his last homily to the nation he had shepherded for the last forty years.

Nitzavim has a much more powerful connotation than standing. It is derived from – or closely related to – the word matzeivah, a pillar, a monument.

In his last oration to the people, Moshe tells them, "You are the matzeivah, the foundation, the pillar, the force – the very future – and eternal carriers of the flame of Torah. You perpetuate the banner of Hashem. I will pass on and move into the annals of history. Likewise, you will have great leaders throughout every generation who will be the backbone of the Jewish People, and they, too, will move on and meet the same end that is destined for all mortals.

Moshe was intimating that, while strong leadership is the guiding force of the Jewish people, the rise and fall of our nation rests on the shoulders of those present and their children. In order that the nation continue thriving, it is necessary for the '*hamone am*', ordinary Jew, to continue as a torch bearer. It is in him that the people of

Hashem find its greatest strength. - One has only to peruse history to note the veracity of this statement.

At the early part of the twentieth-century, the east coast of America was dotted with small towns and cities which were host to distinguished Torah scholars who led their communities. They were real rabbanim of European origin who had emigrated to America, the land of opportunity. They spoke every Shabbos, gave shiurim, lectures and classes, officiated at family milestones both joyous and sad, and maintained a warm relationship with their congregants.

They did not, however, build schools. Thus, in the next generation, the children had no opportunity to expand their Jewish horizons. Therefore, their Yiddishkeit died. The rabbanim passed on to their eternal reward, followed by their devoted congregants. The children were left holding the bag, but the bag was empty. The Yiddishkeit which they sorely needed in order to go on had not been inculcated in them. -Their 'matzeivah' had crumbled.

If we do not educate the next generation, the only monument we will have will, regrettably, be at the cemetery.

כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת.. לֹא־נִפְלֵאת הִוא מִמְּךָ וְלֹא־רְחֹקָה הִוא.. לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הֵוא.. וְלֹא־ מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם הֵוא. כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ- "***For this commandment... is not concealed from you... neither is it far off... it is not in heaven... nor is it beyond the sea... But the word is very near unto you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it***." (30:11-14)

It is puzzling to find these distances expressed as such extremes. Why are we told that it is not in heaven nor beyond the sea, but actually it is to be found within us? It should be sufficient to state simply that this mitzvah is not beyond our reach.

This statement is, however, far from extreme, and conveys a basic truth. Man is composed of two contrasting entities, the physical and

spiritual. He has the ability to soar to the most sublime spiritual heights, or to sink to the nadir of decadence and depravity.

Indeed, the range of man's perception of his ability to perform the mitzvah of repentance which is referred to here, is vast. He may feel incapable of attaining perfect teshuva, and so not even attempt it.

Yet man should be aware that having been created in Hashem's image imbues him with special, albeit hidden, potential. He can and must reach far beyond his grasp; for in doing so he will realize the ability to successfully discharge this mitzvah and come to a true understanding of what Hashem demands of him.





The Rav said tonight that we should get busy before Rosh Hashanah remembering all the good that Hashem has given us since last Rosh Hashanah. But don't we have to spend the time we have left thinking about our sins and our behavior over the past year and making resolutions for improving this coming year?

You'll recall that I said the words, "as part of our work." Really, there's so much work to be done, that we don't have time in the ensuing period, until tomorrow at sunset, to do what has to be done.

But remembering all the good that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us this past year, and thanking Him for it, is most surely a very important part of our preparation. So instead of worrying about fitting it all in, I'll tell you what to do. You make sure to think for five minutes about the past year – about all the good that Hashem has given you since exactly one year ago.

Do that and you'll be a great man. And then another five minutes about resolutions for the coming year. And then you'll be an even greater person. Those ten minutes will be a great accomplishment.

If after sitting here for an hour and a half, you'll go out and think for five minutes, you should know that you're an exception. You're a dagul mei'rivavah – you're one out of ten thousand. There's nobody like you.

Who thinks for five whole minutes about gratitude for Hashem for the past year?! And who thinks for five minutes about making resolutions for improving himself in the coming year?! People talk about it. But that's all.

That's why I said in the beginning of our talk, that if you do this on a small scale, then you shoot up and your head is way above everybody else. First of all, tefilla – you must ask Hashem for help. Say: "please Hashem give me success in my learning this zman – and a little lishma too."

"Never doubt that the place you are in is exactly where you are meant to be. Hashem in His wisdom arranged for you to be there, and it's all for your ultimate good and growth. – Trust His plan, even if it's difficult to see it right now." ~ Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin Z'tl.



Why do we wish people a 'ksivah vachasimah tovah'? What's a brachah going to help? Doesn't the judgment of Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur go according to a person's deeds?

Absolutely a man is judged according to his deeds. But the answer is, that's part of your deeds, to bless the Am Yisroel. And that's why when we pray, we say kosveinu and chosmeinu – b'lashon rabbim. "Write us in the book of life." - "Hashem, remember us. All the members of our shul. Our wives. Our children. Our grandchildren. All the bnei yeshivah. All the yeshivos. Satmar Yeshivah. Mir Yeshivah. Chaim Berlin. Bobov. Torah Vodaas. Passaic. The Slabodka Yeshivah in Eretz Yisroel. And Chevron. And Mir. And Ponovezh. All the yeshivos and all the girls' schools too. Beis Yaakov, Yeshivah of Brooklyn, Prospect Park, all the frum girls. Then, you think about all their fathers and mothers. All the Jews who keep kashrus and Shabbos. All the Jews who are busy keeping the Torah. - We say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, bless them all!"

Think of the Jewish nation in general, but also think about the details. You can think of your father-in-law and your mother-in-law, besides your own parents. Think of your cousins, your children, your grandparents, your grandchildren. Think about all of them.

This is very important what I'm telling you now. It's not a small matter. We want a good year for kol Yisroel amecha, the whole Jewish people. We love the Jewish nation. I love the Jews in Teiman. I love the Sefardi Jews in America. I love the chassidisheh Jews in Williamsburg. - We love all the frum loyal Jews. Some of them are much better than us. And we love them anyhow. We love Boro Park.

Say that. Say, "I love Boro Park! I love all the frum Jews in Boro Park. Ribono Shel Olam, watch over all of the Boro Park frum Jews and all of the Flatbush frum Jews." Say it!

And Hashem says, "Oh; now I see that you mean business. You're blessing My children. And now I'll get busy blessing you."



The Bank Mistake by R' Avrohom Stulberger

A Jewish fellow walks into the bank on Friday afternoon. He goes in to cash a $500 cheque. He gave it to the cashier, and said, "Please can I have cash." He took the cash, and he put it in an envelope, and put it straight into his pocket. As soon as he comes home, he gives the envelope to his wife to pay for some shopping.

The wife goes shopping, and when she came back a few hours later, she says, "What's with the envelope?"

"What do you mean? I cashed a $500 cheque and gave you the cash in the envelope."

She said, "There was $5000 in the envelope – not $500!"

"$5000 - Oh my gosh! The bank made a mistake? Yes, fantastic!"

She says, "On Monday morning you've got to return it, it's not ours."

He's not sure what to do. His wife said, "You're giving it back."

By Tuesday his wife prevailed, and he returned the extra money. On Friday afternoon, there was a knock on the door. There was a man standing there, and he said, "I just want to thank you."

"What do you want to thank me for? What are you talking about?"

"I'm the cashier who mistakenly gave you the $5000. On Tuesday morning, I was called in to the manager, and he sacked me on the

spot!" He said to me, 'We have $4500 unaccounted for, and it was traced to your cash desk – You're fired, you're out of here!'

"But because you returned the money at exactly that time, you saved my job, they said that I can stay. I just want to tell you that I really need this job. – I just want to thank you again and wish you a good Shabbos."

"Good Shabbos? What are you Jewish?"

"Yes, I'm Jewish, a Bucharian Jew. I'm not very religious, but after the way you saved my job by being honest, I've decided to start getting closer to Torah and G-d."

Rabbosai, in a moment in time, you can do the right thing. You might also change somebodies' life!



Rabbi Yaakov Singer - Never Payback Policy

We can never pay Hashem back for everything he does for us, always. Think about it. How is it possible to pay Hashem back if while we are paying back, He is giving more. At that rate our debt only continues to increase.

Truthfully speaking it's impossible to ever catch up. Hashem's rate of giving is way faster than our rate of repaying. We perform sometimes while Hashem performs all the time.

Lucky us Hashem's payback policy has no terms or expiration date. We must therefore constantly live in gratitude and stay humble before our Creator. Thank You Hashem for everything.

Heartspeak by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Teshuva. It is the word of the hour, and there is no better time for the Torah to talk about it than the week before Rosh Hashanah. It means repentance. It means not only taking heart but even changing heart!

And this week the Torah tells us that the requirements are not as difficult as one would perceive. "***It is not in heaven or across the sea. Rather it is very near to you – in your mouth and in your heart – to perform***" (30:12-15).

The Ibn Ezra comments on the three aspects of commitment that the Torah alludes to — the mouth, the heart and the performance. In practical terms, there are commandments of the heart, there are those that entail speech, and there are those that require action.

But on a simple level, the Torah seems to discuss a process that involves commitment before action. It takes the heart and the mouth to make the commitment before the action is performed. Thus the Torah tells us, "it is very near to you – in your mouth and in your heart – to perform."

The sequence of events, however, seems reversed. The Torah puts the mouth before the heart. Shouldn't the Torah have written," It is very near to you – in your heart and in your mouth- to perform"? Doesn't one have to have wholehearted feeling before making verbal pledges? Why would the Torah tell us that it is close to your mouth and your heart?

In the years before the establishment of the State of Israel, **Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the Tzadik of Jerusalem**, would visit the inmates of the British-controlled Jerusalem prison on every Shabbos.

Though most of the Jewish prisoners were not observant, they would quickly don kippot before the revered Rabbi would greet them. Then they would join in the Shabbos morning prayer service that Reb

Aryeh organized and they would read along with the rabbi, as if they were observant Jews.

The entire scene agitated one particularly nasty fellow named Yaakov. He would try in every way to irritate the gentle Rabbi. Each Shabbos, he would purposely light up a cigarette in Reb Aryeh's face in order to disturb him. Reb Aryeh was never fazed. One Shabbos, Yaakov stormed into the makeshift synagogue and snapped at the aged Rabbi.

"Why do you waste your time with these liars and fakes? They are no more observant than I am. They only put the kippah on their heads when you come here. Furthermore, they only pray and open their lips to G-d when you are here. Otherwise, they have no feeling in their hearts!"

Reb Aryeh turned to Yaakov and rebuked him with a firm but gentle voice. "Why do you slander these souls. They come to pray every single week. I do not look at their heads but rather in their hearts. And when I hear the prayers coming from their lips, I know that their hearts are following as well."

It was not long before Yaakov became a steady member of the prayer group.

The Torah may be hinting at a powerful message. It may be telling us that even though our hearts have not arrived as yet, it is still important to use our lips to communicate the commitments and pray the prayers of the Jewish People. The Torah is not far away. It is close and easy for your mouth. The books are available.

The siddur is understandable and translated. It is very near to your lips. All you have to do is talk the talk – sincerely. Soon enough, you will walk the walk with the same sincerity as well.





What is Selichos all about?

Selichos means that a man must make some time for *hisbonenus,* for thinking. **שימו לבבכם על דרכיכם** - *Put your minds on your path in life. Are* you walking in the right way?

When we say Selichos in the month of Elul, so every day we're saying, **נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה** – *let us search out our ways and investigate.* All the *frum* Jews are saying that. But do you do it? How many *frum* Jews have stopped and given five minutes to think over the past year? Believe me, very few. Five minutes inventory, five minutes bookkeeping is very little for a whole year of business. It would be a great thing if somebody could boast, "I'm a man! I fulfilled **נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה**. I spent five minutes thinking of the past full year." It's a very poor little boast, but *halevei v'halevei.*

At least two minutes you should spend! Even on Yom Kippur, do you spend two minutes thinking about your past year? - People are talking, but they don't even know what they're saying. They say, **נחפשה דרכינו** – *let's search out our ways and make an inventory,* and then they forget about actually doing it. It would be a nice inventory if you spend two minutes on your business. But not even two minutes are spent.

And it's so essential. It's imperative. You must have some time to think. Unless you want to continue in your blindness until you fall over

the precipice when it's all over and then it's too late. At the end you'll realize that your life has been wasted for a lack of using your mind.

The golden opportunity of life comes once in history – you won't come back again. And that's what Selichos is for; it's meant to wake you up.



Short And Sweet Story of The Week by Yoni Schwartz

In pre-state Israel in the early 1930s, there was a lot of pressure on a certain building company to finish a project by a quickly approaching deadline. The supervisors were scrambling, and the workers were very stressed. As a result, the supervisor forces the workers to continue construction on Rosh Hashana.

With drops of sweat dripping down their tired red faces, they continued hammering the nails, drilling the screws, and lifting the beams. When somebody heard about this, he frantically ran to **Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, ZT"L**, explaining the situation. Immediately, Rav Kook sent somebody over, not to rebuke them but to blow Shofar.

The Rav's messenger entered the building site without speaking and began blowing the shofar. As it was being blown, there was utter silence. One could feel the stillness and serenity in the air. Slowly, the builders realized that the Rav was sending them not a message of rejection, but of love. - It appeared as if a Divine spark began shining in each of their hearts. Their faces softened and they wiped the sweat off their exhausted foreheads. Despite going against their boss's orders and knowing they risked losing their jobs, they all put down their tools, left the construction site, and followed the Rav's messenger back to shul.

*Comment: In Parshas Nitzavim the **Ohr HaChaim** asks why there was another covenant being made when a nearly identical one was just concluded in the previous parsha. He explains that this covenant*

is different in that it's not merely between Hashem and each individual Jew, but between Jews as an extended family to assure that our fellow brothers and sisters remain connected to our Father in heaven. The voice through which this covenant must speak, must not be one of anger that points out others' mistakes, but a voice of acceptance that says no matter how many mistakes others make, we will always love them.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



Towards the end of Parashas Nitzavim (30:19), Moshe tells Bnei Yisroel in the name of Hashem: **וּבָחַרְתָּ֙ בַּחַיִּ֔ים לְמַ֥עַן תִּחְיֶ֖ה אַתָּ֣ה וְזַרְעֶֽךָ** "Choose life so that you and your children will live."

This reasoning is seemingly perplexing, as just a few verses prior (30:15) we are told that the alternative for choosing life is death, which alone should suffice as to why one should choose life!

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, answers that the necessity for the reasoning in verse 19 is to tell us— don't choose to do Mitzvos only because we don't want the alternative of life. Choose to do Mitzvos with a passionate drive and an enjoyment— that way, your children will also choose the option of life!

"Most men worry about their own bellies and other people's souls, when we all ought to be worried about our own souls and other people's bellies." ~ Rabbi Yisroel Salanter.

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Saying Tehilim is always beneficial, but during Elul, it is especially so. Rav Chaim Palagi, zt"l, writes that the word "Ashrei" hints to the four most ideal times for saying Tehilim, as the letters of "Ashrei" stand for Elul, Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and Yom Tov!



משל למה הדבר דומה

ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו ... (ל-ב)

Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro

A man was irreligious for a great chunk of his life but became freshly observant in more recent times. In doing so, he cut contact with most of his friends and family. He tried to keep his spirits high and for the most part succeeded but driving down an empty parkway late one night made him feel lonely and very dejected.

With no one to call to divert his mind or cheer him up, he turned to *Hashem*. He cried out to *Hashem*, asking Him for a sign that what he was doing was the right thing and that he should continue on.

No more than a few moments passed when all of the sudden, a large eighteen-wheel truck passed him on the side, displaying in big neon-green letters "G-O-D" on the front hood!

He was shocked! Only moments had passed and *Hashem* quite clearly communicated with him in the most startling way. - His mind was put to ease and his commitment to religion was strengthened.

P.S. This truck was actually part of the many "**G**uaranteed **O**vernight **D**elivery" vehicles that are often found on the many highways across the U.S. To save energy, they illuminate only their company's initials!

בס"ד

למודי משה

Is Protecting Torah More Important Than the Security of the Country and Its Citizens?

ויקרא משה ליהושע ויאמר אליו ... חזק ואמץ כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה אל הארץ - "*Moshe called Yehoshua and said to him … 'Be strong and courageous for you shall come with this people to the land'*" (*Devorim* 31:7)

An Israeli minister once said to **Rav Yechezkel Abramsky**, "I understand that the rabbis want to safeguard Torah study. But I guess I don't understand why you want all the *yeshiva bochurim* exempted from army service. Is protecting the Torah more important than protecting the security of the country and its citizens?"

Rav Abramsky answered, "In *Tanach* we find that when Moshe charged Yehoshua with conquering the land, he instructed him to be strong and courageous. However, when Hashem instructed Yehoshua regarding the Torah He said (*Yehoshua* 1:7), "Be ***very*** strong and courageous in protecting and doing all the Torah says."

We see that though we must be vigilant and strong to secure the Land, we must be even more so to protect the Torah!"

"Hashem is the greatest therapist; - He is always available, - He is always listening, - He is always understanding, - He is always able to provide, and His services are always free. "

~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

It is the custom of Belzer chassidim to say the entire Tehillim on the first night of Selichos. (**ברוב עם** - many people together). **Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zy'a** said that his avodas Hashem on the first day of selichos is greater than his Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur service.

When Rebbe Yissachar Dov was old and unwell, his gaba'im tried to convince him not to go to beis medrash for Tehillim on the first day of selichos. But he came to the beis medresh with mesirus nefesh. He said, "How can you prevent me from the great hisorerus and hislahavus of saying the **יהי רצון** after Tehillim together with the congregation?"

It is brought down in the Imrei Pinchas (445) that "**Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l** was very machmir to tovel on the first day of selichos, early in the morning, and on erev Rosh Hashanah, early in the morning, and on the two days of Rosh Hashanah… Although he was lenient [with mikvah], he was more stringent with the tevilos these days."

Once, during Elul, **Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb zt'l** came to the beis din in Yerushalayim. The dayanim asked him, "Do you have a case today?"

He replied that he didn't.

"So why did you come?"

He replied, "I wanted to see how people act when judged. The people who come to beis din are in the midst of a financial dispute; their money is on the line, and I wanted to see their behavior. I saw some people saying Tehillim with a lot of kavanah as they waited for a ruling, and I saw some people animatedly pleading their case.

Everyone is worried, everyone is anxious. And then I thought to myself, why don't we see people being as anxious and worried during Elul when the days of judgment are approaching? And this awesome judgment isn't merely about money. A person's entire future and life is on the line! So, I wonder how people remain so calm in Elul."

We would like to say that it is because they have bitachon and trust that Hashem will grant them good judgment. Halavay that was the source of their calmness. But perhaps it is also because people aren't fully aware of what is at stake. They didn't entirely appreciate what is being judged and determined on these awesome days.

We wonder, why do we wear white clothing on Rosh Hashanah? Shouldn't we wear colorful clothing since we are so certain that we will have a good judgment?

Wearing colorful clothing might imply that we aren't afraid of judgment. Perhaps we don't believe we are being judged, which is why we are so calm and relaxed. But by wearing white clothing, the clothes of tachrichim, we show that we know there's a judgment, only we rely on Hashem to give us a good judgment.

A mashal is told in the name of **Reb Chaim of Brisk zt'l**: A person planning to smuggle contraband across the border can't sleep for nights for fear that he will be caught. The hired wagon driver isn't as afraid because it isn't his merchandise. But when they approach the border, he too gets scared. The only one that never gets scared is the horse.

We say (Tehillim 32:9) **אל תהיו כסוס כפרד**, "Don't be like a horse, like a mule…" We shouldn't be like animals who have no fear at all. We are nearing the days of judgment; our baggage will be inspected, and it is appropriate to be afraid and then to calm the fear with the joy of bitachon.

The main thing is that everyone must be afraid, and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will do tzedakah with us."

The Baal HaTurim writes, "From Elul on I am afraid before Hashem."

The Shlah Hakadosh (beginning of Rosh Hashanah) discusses the pasuk (Amos 3:8) **אריה שאג מי לא יירא**, " A lion has roared; who will not fear?" - **אריה** . He notes the that the letters stand for: **אלול, ראש השנה, יום כיפור, הושענא רבא**. On these days, who isn't afraid of Hashem's judgment?

The Zohar (vol.3 98:) says Hashem established Rosh Hashanah, so we should learn to fear Him.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Normally, we announce and bless the new month on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh. Before Tishrei, however, we do not do this.

• One reason is that it is normally announced so people will know when Rosh Chodesh is, but everyone knows when Rosh HaShana is.

• Another is because it is not called Rosh Chodesh, but Rosh HaShana.

• An additional reason given is that the Satan looks forward to causing us to sin on Rosh HaShana, the beginning of the new year.

When we don't announce it, we "confuse" him, and he thinks his calendar is off, so he leaves us alone.

One year, when they announced Rosh Chodesh Elul, the **Chofetz Chaim** was so overcome with awe and trepidation for the coming days that he fainted. When they revived him, he said, ***"It's no wonder they don't announce Rosh Chodesh Tishrei. Then EVERYONE would faint!***

Project Mesorah – Rabbi Paysach Krohn



We all know the famous posuk in parshas Vayishlach that tells us – **וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר** – '***And Yaakov was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn***.' (Bereishis 32:25)

Why didn't the malach/Satan fight with Avrohom Avinu or Yitzchok Avinu – why specifically Yaakov Avinu? - This is the question that **Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman** asked his Rebbe, the **Chofetz Chaim**.

The Chofetz Chaim answered him: The most important thing that holds Klal Yisrael together is Limmud Torah. A person can fast, a person can daven, a person can cry the whole day, or even do chesed, but so long as there is no Torah, Klal Yisrael can't exist. Because that's the thing that carries us from one generation to another.

If you have a look in our parsha 29:14, you will see something amazing - **כִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֶשְׁנֹו פֹּה עִמָּנוּ עֹמֵד הַיֹּום לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקינוּ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ פֹּה עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם** – '***But with those standing here with us today before the L-rd, our G-d, and [also] with those who are not here with us, this day***.' – Moshe Rabeinu is making a covenant with Klal Yisrael to keep the Torah, 'those people that are standing here in front of me, and even those that are not here.'

The sofei teivos of **אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֶשְׁנֹו פֹּה** spell out **תורה**. And also at the end of the pasuk it says **אֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ פֹּה**, which also spell out **תורה**. This shows that Torah which is represented by Yaakov Avinu, is the thing that carries us – not only this generation, but all future generations that are not even born yet.

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אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם רָאשֵׁיכֶם שִׁבְטֵיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כֹּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל. טַפְּכֶם נְשֵׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ מֵחֹטֵב עֵצֶיךָ עַד שֹׁאֵב מֵימֶיךָ – *'You stand upright this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officers and all the men of Israel; your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water.' (29:9–10)*

The Talmud (Pesachim 50a) tells the story of Rav Yosef the son of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who fell ill and was at the brink of death when his father's prayers brought him back to life. When he came to, his father asked him: "My son, what did you see (in heaven)?" Rav Yosef replied: "I saw an upside-down world. Those who are on top here are on the bottom there; and those who are here regarded as lowly are exalted in heaven."

That the leader or the sage is superior to the wood-hewer or the water-carrier is only from our earthbound perspective, which sees a "hierarchy" of roles. But when "you all stand before G-d," there is no higher and lower—what seems "low" here is no less lofty and significant in G-d's eyes. (Alshich)

Like the various organs and limbs of a body, each of which complements, serves and fulfills all the others, so too the Jewish people: the simple "wood-hewer" or "water-carrier" contributes something to each and every one of his fellow Jews, including the most exalted "head." (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

No child is too young to gain from the study of Torah. Even he doesn't understand anything it will still get him used to the sound of learning ~ Chacham Ovadia Yosef.

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם – *'You stand upright this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d.' (29:9)*

"This day" is a reference to Rosh Hashanah, the day on which we all stand in judgment before G-d. (The Torah reading of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah.) (Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)



◣ Drawing Wisdom Rav Avigdor Miller

מֵחֹטְבֵ֥ עֵצֶ֖יךָ עַ֣ד שֹׁאֵ֑ב מֵימֶֽיךָ - *"...from your woodcutters to your water drawers..."* (29:10)

What is the benefit of undergoing deep introspection?

If you get the knack of using your mind as a bucket, and you lower the bucket into the depths of your soul, you will discover that there is endless wisdom deep down there. The longer the rope, the more deeply you can lower that bucket into your mind and draw forth precious wisdom that will flow without end.

"The good deeds that a person performs become seeds that get sown in the garden of Eden. Thus, each person creates their own paradise." ~ Maggid of Mezritch, Rabbi Dovber Ben Avraham (1704-1772).

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

The Secret to Attaining Good Judgment



In this week's Parsha, Moshe addresses the Jewish people as a whole. From the great leaders to the simple woodcutters, and water carriers, all the different types of Jews were gathered together. The pasuk begins, *Atem Nitzavim Hayom Kulchem*… you are all standing here today.

There is a question here: What does today represent? What day does this signify?

The Kedushas Levi says that *Hayom* – today represents Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment. We all want to get a favorable judgment. What's the secret to good judgment?

I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita that the **Hafla** says something incredible: He says that the secret to getting a good judgment is revealed in the next word of the pasuk – the word *Kulchem*. *Kulchem* means Hashem wants all of you. Meaning Hashem wants every Jew.

Says the Hafla, this is the secret to a favorable judgment. If you want to get a good judgment, you must be able to tell Hashem that you respect every Jew irrespective of their background. Every Jew must be beloved to you in your eyes. Hashem is telling us that if we want a favorable judgment, we must care for His children. Hashem wants us to make sure every Jew feels unique and special. He wants

us to make every Jew count. It doesn't matter their level or stature. It doesn't matter their level of observance. Hashem wants us to take care of and help bring back every single Yid. Every last Jew.

Therefore, the Parsha enumerates and delineates every single stratum, every single type of Jew from the heads of the tribes, all the way down to the woodcutters and the water carriers. In Hashem's eyes, *Kulchem*, everyone is equal. Everyone is special. Hashem is saying, *Hayom* – if you want good judgment, *Kulchem* – you must make sure that every Jew is special. Make sure every Jew is unique, precious, and beloved in your eyes – the same way he is viewed in My eyes.



Rabbi Jeremy Golker - The Key is in the Community

"You have two hours to do this exam. Anyone still writing after I ask you to put your pens down will be disqualified. You may begin."

There was total silence in the exam hall until the invigilator told the students to put their pens down two hours later. All did apart from one young man at the back of the hall. He continued writing for some time after the exam had finished and when he finally finished there was just him and the invigilator in the room. The student nonchalantly made his way to the front.

Without even looking up, the invigilator said: "You heard me. Anyone writing after the exam finished is disqualified."

The student looked the invigilator in the eye and said: "Do you know who I am? Do you know my name?"

"No" said the invigilator.

"Good" replied the student and thrust his exam paper in the middle of the pile of papers on the desk and ran out.

Sometimes we can get away with things as a tzibbur that we wouldn't be able to do as individuals.

Whilst this anecdote probably never happened, it at least brings the point out well. As we approach Rosh Hashana, the leining on the last Shabbos of the year gives us good advice as to how to enter the days ahead of us.

The Nesivos Sholom explains that the word "*hayom - the* day" in the opening possuk of our sedra refers to the day of Rosh Hashana and gives us an important insight in how to prepare for this momentous day.

The key is "kulchem – all of you". As the Midrasha Tanchuma on this possuk explains, we merit Divine assistance on Rosh Hashana when we are "**כולכם באגודה אחת**". To the extent we attach ourselves to the tzibbur, we merit this Divine assistance.

The Nesivos Sholom cites the Zohar which explains that the incident with Elisha and the Shunamite woman also took place on Rosh Hashana. When Elisha asks her how he can be of help and should he speak to the king on her behalf, he was actually referring to the King of Kings.

Her answer is illuminating: **בְּתוֹךְ עַמִּי אָנֹכִי יֹשָׁבֶת**- 'I dwell among my people.' - She also knew that the key is in the community. - To this extent we attach ourselves to the tzibbur, we merit Divine assistance. What can I do to help my community? What can I do to help my neighbour, my school or my shul?

This week's parsha tells us that Torah is accessible.: **כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלֵאת הִוא מִמְּךָ וְלֹא־רְחֹקָה הִוא** – for this mitzvah is not hidden from you and it is not distant". - Well, it just got even nearer…

"If you see someone drowning in a river, don't start lecturing them on how they got there. Jump in and save them." ~ Reb Shlomo of Karlin (1738-1792).



כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלֵאת הִוא מִמְּךָ וְלֹא־רְחֹקָה הִוא "This mitzva … is not far *away* … כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ… but it is very close to you, in your mouth and heart, that you may do it" (30:11,14).

The Ramban and Seforno both explain that this verse is referring to teshuva. Teshuva is what is close to us, and it would seem from here that it is easy for us to accomplish. Only, we know that teshuva is supposed to be very hard. - **Rav Yisrael Salanter** would say that it is easier to learn the entire Shas than it is to uproot one bad midda. How simple can teshuva really be?

The Seforno explains that teshuva is close to you, and therefore you don't need a navi or sage to help you figure out what you need to work on. Of course, the actual work of teshuva is difficult, and the verse is not saying otherwise. Only, to claim "I don't know where to start" is not an excuse. An honest person can reveal within himself what his main problems are and what he needs to work on.

This is a critical message for people to internalize. A common complaint today is: "I don't know what it means to do teshuva; I have no one to guide me." No, if you would devote even a few minutes to thinking about which of your middos needs improvement, you could quickly have a list of things to start working on. If afterwards you still need help, there are people available for this, such as rebbe'im or mashgichim.

The Ramban explains the verse as coming to refute a different obstacle to teshuva. Don't think: "In my present situation I can't do teshuva." No, the verse means that teshuva can be done "at any time and in any place."

How many people say or think to themselves: "If I would be back in yeshiva, or if I could take a vacation, or if I didn't have the burden of parnassa on me I could to teshuva." No, says the verse, you can do teshuva right here and right now. In the very situation you find yourself — which to you seems to rule out doing teshuva — you can and must do teshuva, and it is in fact not far away at all, but close to you.

Mashgiach of Yeshivas Torah Ore **Rav Zeidel Epstein** had a suggestion for how to develop awareness of Hashem. When asked how to prepare for Rosh Hashana, he would advise: "Do what you do the whole year. Learn, daven, do chessed — but work on doing it because this is the ratzon Hashem. Think about that, either before or after you do it." Adding the kavana that "I am now doing the ratzon Hashem" automatically brings Hashem into our train of thought.

In the Novardok Yeshivos, mussar was emphasized year-round, but in Elul extra efforts were made to make *yiras Shamayim* palpably real.

May we build awareness of Hashem in our hearts and do teshuva!

The Secret Power of the Mouth

Parshas Nitzavim contains a verse which is very relevant for Elul: כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ - "***For this matter is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it***" (30:14).

The Ramban (ibid.) explains that the matter "in your mouth and in your heart" refers to doing *teshuva*. The *teshuva* done through the heart is the abandoning of the sin and the regret one feels for what he has done, and his resolve never to return to his evil ways. The *teshuva* done through the mouth refers to the *vidui* (confession) one says at the end of the teshuva process.

However, *vidui* is the final step of the *teshuva* process (Rambam Laws of Teshuva 2:3). If the word "mouth" in this verse refers to *vidui*, why does it appear before the word "heart?" The steps are out of order!

Similarly, Rav Aharon Kotler asks, the *Selichos* that we begin saying in Elul have two parts: we ask Hashem's mercy; and we say *vidui*. Why do we say *vidui*? *Vidui* is the final step of the teshuva process, and yet we are saying it even on the very first night of *Selichos*. Isn't it too early for this?

Rav Kotler answers that indeed, the main *vidui* is at the end of the *teshuva* process, when we stand before Hashem and declare that we have sinned and we have already regretted this and are ashamed of this (ibid. 1:1). Nevertheless, we say an additional *vidui* at the very beginning of the *teshuva* process, in order to wake ourselves up to the fact that we have to do *teshuva*.

The Torah alludes to this additional *vidui* by placing the word "mouth" before "heart" in the verse cited above. Without saying this *vidui*, we might not realize that we've done anything wrong at all! In this additional *vidui*, we are confronted by alarming words— *Ashamnu*, we are guilty, *bagadnu*, we have rebelled, *gazalnu*, we have stolen, etc.

This additional *vidui* is important because many of us have a tendency to think: "Me? I sinned? What did I do? I don't shoplift, I don't drive on Shabbos!" One feels offended at the very thought that he may have misbehaved. By saying the words of *vidui* — "we are guilty, we have rebelled" — and thinking about what they mean, this will hopefully get us to look into our ways and find things that need correcting. Even if a Jew does not rebel in a major way, perhaps in minor ways his behavior does not reflect the importance of Torah and mitzvos.

The Yad Ketana (Laws of Teshuva 1:4) adds another point about *vidui*: By simply saying the words of *vidui*, we tap into a hidden

power within us that wants us to do *teshuva*. Saying words helps plant within us a will to change. - Speaking about *teshuva* can shake us out of our complacency and get us on the path to true self-change.

Rav Dof Yaffe relates that once, a truck driver set out to work in the middle of the night. Like many secular Israelis, he had no connection to Judaism, except for some vague memories from his childhood. As he drove on to the narrow highway entrance, he suddenly saw two headlights coming toward him — another truck was speeding in his direction! There was no room to veer to the side of the road. A head-on collision was inevitable. ..

He pounded on the horn of his steering wheel, flashed his high beam lights, but the truck kept getting closer.

"*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem echad*!" the truck driver heard himself scream, as he closed his eyes and braced himself for the worst.

The moment passed, he looked again through his windshield and saw that nothing had happened. The oncoming vehicle? Did it just disappear? He would never know.

One thing this truck driver did discover was that inside of him was a verse from the Torah that he hadn't thought of in years.

"Where did those words come from?" he began thinking to himself. "If I said them, it means they were always there. Just who am I, really?"

The more he thought of this, the more this truck driver began what would become a process of *teshuva*, until he became a fully observant Jew.

May we access our hidden potential and do *teshuva*!

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - A Friday Burial

Chesed is one of the pillars that hold up the world, as it is written, "The world is built on kindness" (Tehillim 89:3). It's one of the things for which one receives reward in This World while the main reward remains for the World to Come. Chesed can include doing kindness with one's physical body, with one's money, and with one's speech, each person according to his capacity. - On this subject, one person relates this story:

My grandmother passed away at the age of ninety. She was modest, self-effacing, and dignified in every way. Her house was always welcoming to guests and family, and she raised her children not to be materialistic, and to care about others. When she passed away, we all, including the grandchildren and great-grandchildren, felt we had lost someone very dear to us who was the epitome of tznius, kindness, and humility.

My grandfather had died 20 years before her, and with the little money she had, she purchased for him a burial plot. He returned his soul to Heaven on a Friday morning and was buried that afternoon.

Bubby had heard that a Jew who merits being buried on Friday afternoon doesn't suffer the torments of the grave, and the punishments that the deceased might undergo are mitigated. "Zeidy was a very good man and punctilious about his performance of mitzvos and Shabbos observance. It's fitting that Shabbos should greet him when he went to his final resting place."

That's what Bubby would say. And she would add: "If only I, too, will pass away on a Friday when my time comes and be able to greet Shabbos when I arrive in Heaven."

So it was. After an acute illness, Bubby returned her soul to her Creator on a Friday in the middle of the winter at one thirty in the afternoon, three hours before Shabbos.

We called the chevrah kaddisha and begged them to bury her that very day, as she had wished.

The person in charge was very nice as he apologized and said, "I'm sorry, but we're closing the office now. I don't have anyone here who could come right now and it's almost Shabbos. But I'll make sure she'll be buried as soon as Shabbos is over.

We pleaded with him to change his mind, but he wouldn't relent. "Fine," I said with a sigh. "Here, take down my bubby's name, at least." - I waited while he got his ledger and a pen.

"Okay," I said. "Her name was Gratzia Shoshanov, and her address is-"

"Did you say Gratzia Shoshanov?" he interjected. "I'm sending a car right now with someone to do her taharah. We'll arrange for the burial to take place in another hour and a half."

I was stunned. What had just happened?

My grandmother was buried right before Shabbos, next to my grandfather. The man from the chevrah kaddisha made all the arrangements, and when he was standing by her grave, sweat dripping from his face from all the exertion, he said, "Thank you, Gratzia Shoshanov, and may you serve as a meilitz yosher, an advocate, for us all."

I had to know:

As we walked out of the cemetery, I turned to the man. what warranted his change of heart that he agreed to bury my grandmother before Shabbos?

He said, "I married thirty years ago. My wife was an orphan, but she arrived at her wedding day with a large dowry replete with sufficient funds, clothing, and gold jewelry. She told me that there was a good woman who took care of her like she was her own daughter and provided for her so she would get married with dignity.

"They stayed in touch for several years after we married but then lost contact, but the name Gratzia Shoshanov came up from time to time with nostalgia. Now I've been given the opportunity to show her my gratitude. How could I not?"

It's not always easy to do a kindness for another. It takes effort, time, energy. But chesed is one of the pillars that hold up the world, and it reaps reward in both This World and the Next.

The secret to a good life - Give unconditionally and you'll receive unconditionally.



• The Easy-Shmeezy Guide To Torah

In this week's *sedrah* Hashem declares that the Torah is not difficult to keep: *It is neither hidden from you, nor distant from your reach. It is not high up in the heavens … or across the sea …* (Netzavim 13: 11-14). And not only fulfilling all the *mitzvos maasiyos,* but even to achieve all the great ideals that the Torah demands of us is not out of reach. **לֹא רְחֹקָה הִוא מִמְּךָ** – *It's not far away from you,* **כִּי קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד** – *actually it's something very close to you.* The Torah is telling us here that achieving greatness is

something within arm's reach for everyone – it's right here; all you have to do is grab hold of it.

However, when we look around, when we look at our own *avodas Hashem* too, it doesn't appear to be that way. *Karov me'od?* Very close?! The Torah demands from us so much greatness, so much perfection of mind and character! It's *endless* what we're expected to achieve in this world: *Ahavas Hashem, yiras Hashem, deveikus;* to be aware of Him always, to fear Him, to feel gratitude towards Him; to love His Torah and His people. There's so much to accomplish and to us it seems so far away; so far out of reach. How could the Torah say that such immense responsibility is "very close" to us?

- **To Say, To Think, To Do**

Now, pay good attention to our *possuk* because that's the question it's coming to answer. Achieving Torah ideals is not difficult – it's not "hidden and distant from you" – only that you have to start out in the right way: **כִּי קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד** – *How is it very close to you?* **בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ** – *With your mouth and with your mind to do it.* There are three words here and they indicate three separate stages; number one is **בְּפִיךָ** – *with your mouth.* It means you have to talk; we'll soon explain that. The second is **בִּלְבָבְךָ** – *in your heart;* it means your thoughts. In *lashon kodesh* 'heart' always means the thoughts because genuine thoughts are always backed up with *hargasha,* with feelings. And the third stage is **לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ** – *to do it.* So again – it's **בְּפִיךָ**, your mouth; then **בִּלְבָבְךָ**, your thoughts, and finally **לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ**, to accomplish.

The Torah is telling us here the way to accomplish things in this world. The first step is **בְּפִיךָ**, to say it with your mouth. By means of expressing with your mouth the great Torah ideals, by repeating them again and again, little by little those words have an effect **בִּלְבָבְךָ**, on your mind. It's Torah psychology – I say the word psychology, *lehavdil* – today they call it autosuggestion, but it's an ancient Torah teaching.

- **The Mouth Is A Tow-Truck**

Our great teacher, the *Chovos Halevavos,* describes the principle as follows: *hamachshava nimsheches achar hadibbur – Your thoughts are pulled along by your words;* it means that the way you talk, that's the way you're going to think. It doesn't mean immediately, but over time the way you talk will influence the way you think. Your mind begins to think along the lines of your words.

And there's nothing more important than that because your mind is who you really are! The *Chovos Halevavos* says that "most of the achievements that a man accomplishes in this world is by means of his thoughts." Thoughts are supreme! And the way to create a mind is by saying words: *Bificha,* you'll speak; *ubilvavcha*, and it will transform your mind; *la'asoso,* in order to make a new person out of you. The greatest accomplishment you could make in this world is by making something out of yourself, and by means of speaking the right words, in the course of time, you'll become a different personality!

- **The Gift Gorillas Don't Have**

The ability to talk is one of the most outstanding features of humanity and it's something unique to Mankind. Don't listen to what they tell you in the National Geographic and the New York Times. Never will they teach a gorilla to speak! The *koach hadibbur,* the ability to speak words, belongs to us only. And what we're learning now is that its purpose is not merely for communicating one with another – one of the prime purposes of the gift of speech is the opportunity to create a Torah mind.

And that's because the mind works best in tandem with the mouth. Actually when we think, in a minor way the organs of speech are formulating. Your larynx, your palate, your tongue are being activated even while you're thinking. It may come as a surprise to you what I'm saying, but most of our thinking is verbalized in the organs of speech — even if we're not expressing the words, but as

we are thinking, the organs of speech are functioning in a sublimated way. That's why when your mouth is busy eating it's harder to think – when you are busy chewing and swallowing, your speech organs are busy doing something else and that makes it harder to think. It's possible but it's more difficult.

And therefore speech is the perfection of the thought process – the best way for a person to sharpen his thoughts is by means of expressing them with his mouth. And therefore if you actually say the words instead of just thinking them, it becomes so much clearer; it brings the ideas into clearer focus. So even though you might be thinking some noble thought, nevertheless by articulating, by saying with your mouth the noble ideals that you think in your mind, you're making it so much more real to you and it becomes so much more effective in transforming who you are.

- **Making Him King**

I'll give a *mashal*, something that's approachable to you. When Rosh Hashana comes, so we'll stand all day saying: *Hashem melech, Hashem malach, Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed*. What are we doing? We should say it once and finished. We agree, "He's the king." What's with "*Hashem melech"* all day long? Hakodosh Boruch Hu needs us to proclaim Him king like we need a hole in the shoe. He was always the King and He'll always be the King. He doesn't need us to crown Him.

The answer is that we're talking to ourselves. We're putting into our mind, into our feelings, that He's the One and Only. And that's why we say it so many times, because the repetition, saying it again and again, puts it more firmly into our mind. *Beficha*, you say it; *u'bilvolvcha*, and it gets etched into your *neshama*. You say it again – "*Hashem Melech!*" – and it's etched in a little deeper. That's the purpose; all day long we stand on our feet and shout "Hashem is our King," because we want to bring into our *seichel*, into our *hergeshim*, into our emotions, that He's the king.

- **Gaining His Aroma**

And that's why we *daven* with words. People always ask me here, why can't we *daven* with our thoughts? Hashem knows what we're thinking – why do we have to express it in words? So the *Chovos Halvovos* answers that by saying great words, we think great thoughts. The words we use make us think – they sharpen our thoughts. That's why it's called *tefillah*. *Tefillah* comes from the word, *pillel*, to think, and *mispallel* – it's called the reflexive form in *dikduk* – means 'to cause yourself to think.'

That's why every day we retrace Dovid's footsteps by repeating the *shirei Dovid avdecha*. We repeat his great words over and over again because if we say them properly – of course, if you're just *davening uhp* the words, just saying the words without any thought then it's nothing – but if you're saying the words of Dovid Hamelech with the intention of utilizing the *koach hadibbur*, so then our minds become shaped in that direction and all of those ideals that Dovid spoke about become part of our minds; a little bit of the aroma of Dovid's personality enters into our minds.

- **How to Say Tehillim**

That's why the *Chovos Halvovos* said that it's a good idea to say *Tehillim* when nobody is around and to say it with emotion; not to say a whole *yom*, no. Say it slowly, slowly, with emotion. You can become great from *Tehillim*. I remember when I was a boy, I used to go to a certain *shul* and Shabbos between *mincha* and *ma'ariv*, they didn't eat *shalosh seudos* in the *shul*. They sat and they said *tehillim*. They said it slowly; every word was a diamond. They were putting diamonds into their minds.

That's why I say that it's not good to have a *niggun* without words – it should always be with words. And you're saying the words over and over again not because you want to hear the *nigun*; not because you want to maintain the tune, the high part and the low part. No! You want to maintain the words in your heart deeper and deeper. The

fact you're repeating the words should be utilized by you. Absolutely! Each time you say it, it's with conviction, with the intention that the ideals of the words should be pressed deeper and deeper into your *neshama*. And as those words are repeated by you, they gain a firm hold in your mind and you become a different person as a result.



Rabbi Binny Friedman recalled a visit he made years ago to the Old Synagogue of the *Maharal* (known as the *Altneu Shul*, in Prague). He immediately noticed its most distinctive feature: with the exception of some Hebrew letters very high up near the ceiling, the walls are completely blank, devoid of any art or decoration. - Standing in stark contrast to all the other Jewish synagogues of Prague (not to mention synagogues all over Europe), this detail demanded an explanation.

There is an intensity to this *shul* with its history of hundreds of years in existence; eventually Rabbi Friedman learned why.

On April 17, 1389, Easter Sunday, a Catholic Priest leading a procession past the Jewish community of Prague was hit with some sand thrown by a few Jewish children as they were in the midst of playing. Claiming they had denigrated Christianity and desecrated his lord, his incitement led the clergy to encourage savage mobs to pillage, ransack, and burn the Jewish quarter for two days in what became known as the Prague pogrom. 3,000 Jews were killed by their Christian brethren; all but the youngest children were murdered,

with countless more injured and maimed, many of whom had their limbs cut off and eyes put out. Practically the entire Jewish community of Prague was wiped out in a matter of 48 hours..

As there were not enough able-bodied Jewish men left to give the dead a proper burial in a short period of time, to prevent a further desecration of the dead, the 3,000 Jewish bodies were stacked in the *shul* until little by little they were able to be given a proper Jewish burial. By the time they were all buried, however, the blood from their bodies had seeped into the walls of the building all the way up to the top of the windows. For over two centuries this was how the walls were left; the red stained stones a constant reminder of the price the Jewish community of Prague had paid for their faith.

When the ***Maharal*** came from Poland to Prague in the latter half of the 16th century and saw the blood on the walls, he told the Jewish community they could not pray there as the blood needed burial. Eventually they compromised by plastering the walls to "bury" the blood behind the plaster. But every 100 years or so, the blood seeps through and the walls need to be re-plastered. As part of a compromise, the walls remained blank without decoration out of respect for those who lost their lives.

Eventually the **Noda B'yehuda** convinced them to decorate the top of the walls with verses but only the first letters of each word.

Think about who those 3,000 murdered Jews of 1389 might have been today. Millions more Jews would be alive. The loss is staggering. Same goes for the *kedoshim* of the Holocaust, pogroms and countless other tragedies.

"Don't try to fix people; try to love them. Love will do the fixing." ~ Reb Noson of Breslov (1780-1844).



"The Man Who Blesses Himself In His Heart Saying…" Wasn't Totally Wrong

In Parshas Nitzavim, the Almighty warns Klal Yisrael that they are about to enter a land in which there is going to be an abundance of idolatry. "And you have seen their detestable things, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were with them. Lest there should be among you man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turns away this day from the L-rd our G-d to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a rot that bears gall and wormwood; and it shall come to pass when he hears the words of the curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying: 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart — that the watered be swept away with the dry'. The L-rd will not be willing to pardon him, but then the anger of the L-rd and His jealousy shall be kindled against that man and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie upon him and the L-rd shall blot out his name from under Heaven and the L-rd shall separate him out from all the Tribes of Israel because of his behavior." [29:16-20]

There is one thing about those pasukim that does not seem to make sense. After the person hears all this and is warned clearly and graphically of the punishment for serving the gods of the indigent nations of Canaan, how can the person "bless himself in his heart and say 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart'"? What could he be thinking? The Almighty warns him and tells him not to do this lest all these curses befall him!

We might understand a stubborn person's response to be I do not care; I do not believe in G-d. However, this person hears the curse, he accepts it, but assures himself in the recesses of his heart "everything will be okay with me". What is he thinking?

The Ibn Ezra asks this question and explains this person's theological error. The person believes that he will be able to coast along on the righteousness of the Tzadikim, who are numerous and thereby will counterbalance his own wickedness when the Day of Judgment arrives. That is why the pasuk says, "Therefore the L-rd will not be willing to pardon this person." G-d will separate out this individual from the righteous masses and punish him individually.

Theoretically, this schemer is right. There is indeed great power in being part of a community. It is only because G-d warns "I am not going to accept that", that this plan will fail. In theory, however, the plan had logic to it. It is valid to believe that being part of a Tzibur [community] gives one protection.

The Mir Yeshiva was the only European Yeshiva to survive the Holocaust of World War II intact. They travelled from Poland to Lithuania, to Russia, across Siberia, to Kobe Japan and then to Shanghai where they spent several years during the war. They did all their travels together as a community. The administration of the Yeshiva told everyone to stay together as a Tzibur in order to survive. They emphasized this idea to the extent that when things were still "semi-normal" and it was Succoth bein haZemanim, the Yeshiva did not allow any bochur to go home for Succoth but rather insisted that they remain together with the Yeshiva as a strategy for survival. For the same reason, **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz** told the students they all had to learn in the same Beis Medrash so that they should have the power of the community and the merit of the community as protection.

This is why they made it. Even though individually, each student may not have been worthy, such is the segulah [special treasure] protection of being part of a bigger community.

This is the thought process of the misguided Jew who believes "peace will come to me (despite my waywardness)". "I am so confident in the merit of the community that I believe I can get

away with my sins and still live in peace." He would be right if not for G-d's specific warning in this situation.

The Zohar states this same idea in Parshas Noach and advises individuals against seeking preferential treatment in Heaven at the time of Judgment. The Zohar focuses in on the story of Elisha and his Shunamite hostess as recorded in Melcahim II Chapter 4. According to the Zohar, Elisha was staying at her house during the holiday of Rosh HaShanah, a time when the Almighty was judging the world. Elisha asked her "Can I speak to the King on your behalf?" [Melachim II 4:13] The simple reading of this pasuk is that he is referring to seeking a political favor for her from the King of Israel. However, the Zohar interprets the word "King" here to refer to the Holy One Blessed Be He.

The Shunamite woman could never refuse this offer! The great prophet offered to intercede on her behalf, with a request to the King of Kings, on the Day of Judgment! Which of us would not accept that offer? Yet, the Shunamite woman turns Elisha down and replies "(No thank you.) In the midst of my people do I dwell". She responds, according to the Zohar, that she would prefer judgment as part of the community than to have her individual case brought before the Almighty, even by a prophet speaking on her behalf. When one is singled out (s)he has to stand on (her/) his own merits — all of one's sins are examined alongside all of one's good deeds. Judgment as part of a community is a much more benign process.

Similarly, **Rav Leizer Yudel Finkel** (the son of the **Alter from Slabodka**), the Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva in Europe and in Eretz Yisrael did not sit on the Eastern Wall of the Yeshiva (at least on the High Holidays). He wanted to pray in the spirit of "in the midst of my people do I dwell" (like the words of the Shunamite woman).

This technique of identifying oneself with the community at large is one of the time-honored Segulahs to emerge meritorious from the

Judgment of Heaven. May we each find appropriate ways to attach ourselves to the community, to become more part of the tzibur, and to do for the tzibur so that the merit of the community will protect as we approach the upcoming Days of Judgment.

Approaching the Day of Judgment: Fear – Yes; Hopelessness – No

Rashi cites a well-known Medrash explaining the juxtaposition of the pasuk "You are all standing here today…" (Devorim 29:9) with the 98 curses in last week's Parsha. The Medrash says that after hearing all of the curses, the Jewish people turned green and became despondent, asking, "who can withstand all of these curses"? They lost hope. "What is going to be with us?" they asked.

Therefore, in this week's parsha, Moshe tries to appease them. "You are still here after forty years in the wilderness. You angered Hashem many times…including the incidents of the Egel, the Spies, and the complainers, yet He never destroyed you. You are still here…"

However, Moshe's appeasement appears to be self-defeating. The whole purpose of the curses was to put the 'Fear of G-d' in the people. The curses were very effective. The people were scared stiff. Moshe successfully shook them up. But now he seems to be undoing the whole thing. "Don't worry, you got away with so much in the past…" Does this not destroy the whole impact of the Tochacha?

Many commentaries direct us to a very simple truth. There is a vast difference between 'The Fear of G-d' and hopelessness. Being afraid, frightened and nervous about the future can be constructive. But feeling that a situation is hopeless (being meyayesh) is not.

That is what had happened. The Jews gave up hope. They threw in the towel.

The worst thing that anyone can do is to give up hope. This is a lesson that we should all bear in mind as we approach the Yom HaDin (Day of Judgment). The Yom HaDin is nothing to take lightly. It is serious business. If we really honestly understood the Yom HaDin, we would be scared and frightened.

But that is not the same as looking at the situation as hopeless. Hopelessness is not a Jewish characteristic. Never give up hope.

After the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, "all the gates (which prayers travel through) were closed, except for the Gates of Tears" (Bava Metzia 59a). After the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, it became much more difficult for our prayers to penetrate the Heavenly Court. But there is one gate that remains open — the Gates of the Tears.

It is said that the **Kotzker Rebbe** asked: if the Gates of Tears never close, then what is the purpose of the Gates? A gate implies that some get in and some do not.

The Kotzker answered that tears of desperation do not get through. When a person cries because he feels that he needs the help of Hashem, when the tears represent the innermost and purest of a person's thoughts ('the sweat of the soul') those tears have terrific power. But not if they are tears of helplessness and hopelessness – those tears do not get in and that is why the gates are necessary.

In halacha , when an object is stolen, there is a concept of 'yeiush' – giving up hope. When an object is stolen and the former owner gives up hope of ever getting it back and then it is sold to an unsuspecting purchaser, the purchaser may keep it.

The reason for this is that once the victim gives up hope (of getting the object back), his last connection with the object is severed. As long as a person has not given up hope, there remains a thin thread that still connects him to his lost object. It is not totally lost from him.

The same concept exists hashkafically (in Jewish thought). For every plague, there is a cure. Hashem creates the remedy before he creates the plague (Megillah 13b). We somehow need to connect with that remedy.

How do we connect with the remedy when a plague seems to have no end? There is only one tenuous connection between that remedy and us. The connection is hope.

The same hope that connects a person to his lost object connects a person who is experiencing the dire straits of an illness to the potential cure that Hashem can provide. But once a person gives up hope and feels that the situation is futile, he has severed the connection between the cure and the plague.

That is why no matter how desperate and overwhelming a situation may seem, we must never give up hope. **The Izbitzer Rebbe** once commented that the reason why all Jews are called after the Tribe of Yehudah (Yehudim) is because when Yosef confronted his brothers and planted the incriminating evidence, the brothers gave up hope. Only Yehudah did not give up hope. "And Judah drew near to him…" (Bereishis 44:18). Yehudah never gave up hope. That is the attitude that must typify all Jews.

As frightening as the Yom HaDin should be for every Jew, there is a difference between fright and hopelessness. We need to enter the Yom HaDin sober, afraid, and nervous as if we are entering a court. But we cannot enter the Yom HaDin without the attribute of Yehudah – the attribute of hope.

"To love another means to be their mirror when they've forgotten their own beauty." ~ Maor VaShamesh, Rabbi Klonimus Kalman Epstein (1753-1823)

Talking The Talk and Walking The Walk

Parshas Nitzavim provides an important lesson in *chinuch*. After very harsh warnings about what will happen to us if we do not keep the Torah, the Torah concludes with the *pasuk* "The hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d, (*ha'nistaros l'Hashem Elokeinu*) but the revealed things (*ha'niglos*) are for us and for our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah." [Devorim 29:28]

The job we do raising our children lasts with them and perpetuates throughout future generations, because how we raise them directly influences how they raise their children.

Rav Wolbe writes that a person's biggest motivation to be a *baal midos tovos* is his children. Even if a person knows that he is not the biggest *mentsch* in the world and his natural inclinations would not be to go out of his way to show kindness to a neighbor, nonetheless, everyone wants to have "good children". The surest way to accomplish that is to "talk the talk and walk the walk."

Someone once asked the **Chazon Ish**: He has the option of *davening* in a shul on Rosh Hashana where he would be able to take his child with him or to *daven* in a Yeshiva, but since the Yeshiva is so crowded, he would not be able to take his child with him. However, the davening in the Yeshiva is a superior religious experience for the father – it would be a more intense *davening* and he would have greater *kavanah*. The Chazon Ish told him that it is preferable to *daven* with his child next to him. It is important to show the child how his father cries on the *Yomim Noraim*. This leaves an everlasting impression on the child.

This is precisely the intent of the *pasuk*. The way we act in private (*ha'nistaros*) remains strictly between the person and G-d. However, that which is public (*ha'niglos*) has an impact not only on the person but also on his children and on all future generations of descendants.

Paying Attention to the Voice of the Almighty

Delivered 9/11/2001 + 2

"And it will be when all these things come upon you – the blessing and the curse – that I have placed before you, then you will take it to your heart among all the nations where Hashem, your G-d, has dispersed you." [Devorim 30:1]

I think that perhaps the most appropriate reaction to this occasion is the words of Parshas Nitzavim.

The pasukim talk about a person who fails to react to *"all these curses"*. Hashem will not be willing to forgive the person who does not react to the curse he has witnessed [Devorim 29:19].

In any year, Parshas Nitzavim always has a profound impact, as the last parsha before Rosh HaShannah. In the context in which we stand following the horrific events of the past week, it is only necessary to read the verses.

"And you will return to Hashem your G-d and hearken to His voice." [Devorim 30:2]. The first step of repentance is to hearken to His voice (v'sha-mata b'kolo). Perhaps this is not to be interpreted as we normally would, to listen to His voice and fulfill His commandments. *"You shall hearken to His voice"* means that when the Almighty speaks to us we need to pay attention.

When Hashem speaks through natural phenomenon or through historical events, we must attune our ears, lift up our antenna, and receive His message. This is the first step in Teshuva.

The Talmud says that thunder was only created in order to straighten out the crookedness and perversions in a person's heart. [Berachos 59a] When a person hears a clap of thunder and flinches, the experience may give him pause. When the **Chofetz Chaim, zt"l**, used to hear thunder he would ask "What does Father want?" (Vos vill der Tata?)

If the Chofetz Chaim was alive today and he saw and heard what happened this week, what would he do? If he even saw the Voice of Hashem in a clap of thunder, what would he say to the events of this last week? Vos vill der Tata? What does Father want?!

It is obvious that you go through life in such a way that when G-d merely taps you on the shoulder you hear it and you get the message. It is about hearing such messages that the Torah states in this week's parsha "*And you shall hear His Voice*" (v'sha-mata b'kolo).

"And with a great shofar blast He shall blow and with a small silent voice He shall be heard" [Yomim Noraim liturgy]. Do we ever stop to consider the paradox of the contrast in this pasuk from our High Holiday prayers? If He blows with a great shofar blast, why is it then only a small little voice that we hear? If the shofar blast is so powerful that even the angels tremble from it, then when it reaches us, why is it only perceived as a small silent voice (kol demama daka)?

This is the nature of people. The Almighty could give out the loudest blast possible. It could be a cataclysmic event, but we only hear the small silent voice. People can react in all sorts of ways, but are they hearing the Voice of Hashem? Are they asking the one simple question: What does Father want?

We heard tonight all sorts of suggestions as to what our reaction must be from people who are far greater than us. Some suggest it has to be a strengthening of the honor of the synagogue and the honor of prayer. Others suggest an increased diligence in avoiding monetary improprieties. Still others suggest it must be restraint in expenses when it comes to Simchas. One hears a variety of suggestions.

I say one thing. **DO SOMETHING**. We cannot let an event like this go by and not do **SOMETHING**. I told the students in my class, who are for the most part between 20 and 23 years old, that every generation has an event that is seared into the collective memory of

that generation. To my father's generation it was September 1, 1939. Every year on that day, my father would say "Today Hitler invaded Poland." For my generation it was November 22, 1963 (the day John Kennedy was assassinated). In the sum total of history it is probably an insignificant event, but it is something that everyone of my generation remembers. For this generation it is and will be September 11, 2001.

It was a cataclysmic event. No one knows how this is going to play out. No one knows whether this is the first volley of the Final War. No one knows whether this is going to be "good for the Jews" or "bad for the Jews". No one knows whether the initial reaction of "blame those Arabs" will prevail or whether the secondary reaction will be "but it is because of those Jews." No one knows whether this economy that is already teetering on the cusp of a recession will now be thrown into the throes of a full depression. No one knows.

But let us not make the collective mistake of just letting this moment pass. When the Ribono shel Olam has spoken to us more clearly than He has in decades, we must listen. The last time this country lost more than 3,000 people in one day was during the Civil War! If we don't hear this, we are spiritually dead. If we don't respond, we are beyond help.

Don't make the mistake of saying "Well, who says it's because we talk during davening! Who says? How do you know?" Don't make the mistake of saying: "What does this have to do with spending too much money on weddings? What does this have to do with Lashon Hara? What does this have to do with bitul Torah?"

I don't care. One thing I do know. If after 120 years, I go to Heaven and stand before the Heavenly Throne and they ask me "What did you do in the aftermath of this day?" and I tell them that I did such and such, and they tell me "That was not the correct reaction to why this happened," I'll know how to respond. I will say, "I'm sorry. I did not have a prophet. I did not have a proper spiritual guide. I just

listened to the great men of my generation and did what they told me. This is what I thought. What else could I do? I tried."

I do not know for sure how Judgment works up there, but I am fairly confident that the Almighty will accept such an answer. "I tried; I did **SOMETHING**" is an acceptable answer. But if I go up there and I say: "I did not do anything," and they will exclaim "How could you not do anything?" What will I say? "Because I was unsure what do to. I did not know for sure. Therefore, I did nothing and my life did not change when I saw such an event." Heaven forfend what the Almighty might say if we offer such a response.

This is my message: Whatever it is – **DO SOMETHING**! The Ribono shel Olam talked to us like he has not spoken to us in generations. Do not ignore your father when He speaks to you! Do not just walk out of the room.

"Yes father. What do you want? I am going to do something, father, because I know you want something. I do not know exactly what you want, but I know you want something." - A person that always asks himself "What does Father want?" is guaranteed a place in the World to Come.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter once walked past a shoemaker's store late at night and found the shoemaker still at work, fixing a pair of shoes. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter asked him, "It is so late at night, why are you still working?"

The shoemaker responded, "As long as there is oil in the candle, there is work to be done."

This was an innocuous statement, but Rav Yisrael Salanter took it to mean that as long as there is "oil in the candle" – i.e. as long as the soul burns yet within man, there is work to be done in terms of service to the Almighty.

Knock, Knock! By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky



In the Selichos service, we beseech the Almighty as if we were destitute. **כְּדַלִּים וּכְרָשִׁים דָּפַקְנוּ דְלָתֶיךָ: דְּלָתֶיךָ דָּפַקְנוּ רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן**

"Like beggars and paupers we knock on Your door. On Your door, we knock, Merciful and Compassionate One" (from the first Selichos prayer L'cha Hashem hatzedaka). Again, we knock – not once, but twice! Isn't once enough? Surely G-d is not in the kitchen. He can hear us the first time!

My brother-in-law, Rabbi Simcha Lefkowitz, Rabbi of Congregation Toras Chaim in Hewlett tells the following story:

A meshulach came one sunny Sunday morning to a large home in the Five Towns of Long Island. Eagerly he rang the bell and simultaneously knocked on the door. A woman, quite displeased, swung open the ornate portal to her home and, knowing the man's intent, she began to shout.

"What do you want? I never met you in my life! How do you expect me to give charity to someone I have never seen? I'm sorry, but this is my policy and I just can't give you!"

The meshulach was not perturbed. Slowly, he walked around the block and fifteen minutes later he was back at the same door. Again he rang the bell, and again the woman came out shouting. "I told you I never met you in my life! How do you expect me to give charity to someone I have never seen! Didn't I clearly explain my policy to you?"

The meshulach just smiled as he replied. "You are absolutely correct. However, you forgot one small thing. You know me already! After all, we met ten minutes ago!"

The weeks before Rosh Hashanah we must be wary that we may have to knock a few times to get into the big door. Of course, Hashem knows who and what we are, but we may be a little foreign to him. The daily shofar blasts, the recital of chapter 27 of Tehillim, L'Dovid Hashem Ori, twice daily in our prayers and the recital of daily selichos are all summarized in the words we recite, "like beggars we knock…we knock on Your door, Merciful One."

We realize that we must reacquaint ourselves with the commitments and the great resolutions that we accepted upon ourselves one year ago. But if we knock once and knock again, ultimately we, too, can smile at the One standing at the door and ask for all our desires. After all, we were just there. And He knows us already!

Shana Tova U'Msukah Happy and Healthy Sweet New Year

Good Shabbos! Mordechai Kamenetzky – Yeshiva of South Shore

Prayer of The Poor by Avraham Weinroth

There may be a beginning of an understanding of the way of prayer in a definition given by Rav Naftali Trop. He gave a talk, at the request of the Chofetz Chaim, before the recital of selichos.

In the selichos prayers we say, "Like destitute people and indigents we knock on Your door."

There is a difference between someone who is poor and a person who has reached the level of destitute and indigent. A poor person still has something in the house. So if he knocks on a door and is not answered he moves on.

This is not the case with one who is destitute and indigent – he has nothing at all. If a person reaches that level, he won't leave the door he is knocking on, and if the door isn't opened, he will keep knocking until he is answered. He has no choice, he has nowhere to go to and nobody else to turn to.

In the prayers it says, "You hear the cry of the poor." When a poor person cries out, HASHEM hears. But "the cry of the indigent You will pay attention, and You will save him." This means one who reaches the level of indigent, along with the recognition that he has no other hope. He will return to pray again and again. - This person has a guarantee that HASHEM will save him.

The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 16b) says: Every year which is destitute at the beginning will be enriched at its end." The prayer of the indigent and destitute is answered. Its power is dependent on the understanding that there is no other possibility for salvation. This gives one the ability to beseech again and again until he breaks down the gates.

Prayer which is accompanied by self-surrender, from one who knows that he has run out of any other options, breaks down the gates and knows no boundaries.

One Brocha At A Time

A talmid once asked the **Chazon Ish** how he prepared for Rosh Hashanah. He expected to hear about sleepless nights of *mussar* learning, or special fasts. Instead, the Chazon Ish answered simply: "I make sure that in Elul, every *brocha* I say is with full *kavana*. If I can train myself to say *Baruch Atah Hashem* with true awareness, then on Rosh Hashanah I stand before the King not with fear alone, but with a connection." The *talmid* who told this over said that after watching the Chazon Ish *bentsh*, he understood that this "small preparation" was greater than the most intense *kabbalos*.

The essence of Elul is that a person can begin again. If not for Elul, life would be only habit and repetition — Elul is the gift of renewal. — Rav E.E. Dessler (Michtav Me'Eliyahu vol. 1, p. 15)



The Chofetz Chaim once arrived in the yeshivah at eleven o'clock in the morning and began to speak about teshuvah:

"If a person's shirt becomes dirty it must be cleaned. Even a person who doesn't go near anything dirty needs to clean his shirt every couple of weeks, or at least once a month.- A shirt needs to be washed. Olam Hazeh iz a shmutziger platz. As men geit tzu shmutziger pletzer, pletzer fun kino vetaavoh, darf men vashen unzerer neshomah, fun yeder flek darf men vashen un mechabes zein (in a similar way, this world is a dirty place, we must wash our neshomos from every speck of dirt)."



The Chofetz Chaim would take current events and teach a practical lesson from them. With the invention of the gramophone the Chofetz Chaim said:

"The purpose of this invention is to strengthen Yidden in the realisation that words that are said are never lost, but rather, 'kol maasecho b'sefer nichtovim' (words that are said in this world are recorded for eternity). The utterances of a person's lips are retained for scrutiny after one hundred and twenty years of his life."

The pasuk says, **לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִוא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָּנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְיִקָּחֶהָ לָּנוּ וְיַשְׁמִעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה** "It [Torah] is not in heaven, [for you] to say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and acquire it for us, and inform us of it, and we will fulfill it?' **וְלֹא־מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם הִוא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲבָר־לָנוּ אֶל־עֵבֶר הַיָּם וְיִקָּחֶהָ לָּנוּ וְיַשְׁמִעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה** - Nor is it overseas, [for you] to say, 'Who will travel overseas for us, and acquire it for us, and inform us of it, and we will fulfill it?' "(Devarim 30:12,13)

The Talmud (Eruvin 55A) says the pasuk teaches us that had the Torah been in heaven or beyond the sea, we would have been obligated to find a way to get it. Torah is so crucial for our existence that even if it would be extremely difficult to acquire, we would still have to make every possible effort necessary to study Torah. The more we appreciate the value of Torah study, the more we will be able to overcome any obstacles that might prevent us from studying Torah.

Some obstacles may seem insurmountable. However, a person with a burning desire to study Torah will find a way to achieve their goal of learning Torah.

The Rogatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yoseph Rosen zt"l, said something fascinating at the funeral of **Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk** (the author of the Meshech Chachma). Rabbi Rosen's father had been wheelchair bound ever since he could remember. His father had lived on the second floor of a house. When Rabbi Rosen was a young boy his father's house caught fire and started burning down. Someone ran into the house to save his father. His father said that he could not go because he had an old aunt who lived there. She was unable to walk, and he felt that he could not leave her behind. Suddenly,

Rabbi Rosen's father jumped up, and walked over to his aunt. He put her over his shoulder and ran out of the house. Then he collapsed back into his chair again. For the rest of his life, he never stood on his own feet."

How was it possible for someone who could not move his legs to be able to jump up and carry his weight plus the weight of his aunt on his shoulders and run out of the house?

Rabbi Rosen said that when there is a fire burning, a person is empowered with supernatural powers. Then Rabbi Rosen said that Rav Meir Simcha was able to accomplish so much for Torah because he always pictured a fire burning in front of himself.

Let's enter Rosh Hashana aflame, with the fire of Reb Meir Simcha burning in our eyes. And may that fire ignite rachamim in Shamayim, overturn decrees, and bring us a year of yeshuos, nechamos, and geula. - ***'Veil ven es brent a fayer, ken men ales ton.'***

The Answer to Philosophical Questions

Rabbi Zev Smith shared a story that was retold by a well-known rav, who personally witnessed it (preface to Sefer Divrei Chachmah).

This rav was acquainted with a young Jewish man, whom we will call Michael. Michael came from an irreligious background, but at some point, he began exploring Yiddishkeit. One day, he approached the rav:

"I am considering becoming religious, but I have some reservations. I have philosophical questions that are really bothering me.

If I could speak with someone who could answer them, I think I would be ready to make the commitment."

The rav replied, "I will take you to **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky**. He will be able to answer your questions."

He arranged a meeting, and when the day arrived, he accompanied Michael to Rav Yaakov's home. They arrived a few minutes early, and as they waited, Michael had time to observe Rav Yaakov interacting with a family with several children.

After a few moments, Michael whispered to the rav who had escorted him, "We can leave — I am ready to become religious."

"But we haven't even spoken to Rav Yaakov. You haven't asked your questions!"

"That's true," replied Michael. "I didn't ask any questions, but I already got my answers. Just by watching this great man, I know the answers. By seeing the way he treats others—even the children—by witnessing his respect and love for people, I realize that if this is what our religion is all about, if this is what Torah is, then it is something I want to be a part of."

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

טַפְּכֶם נְשֵׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ מֵחֹטֵב עֵצֶיךָ עַד שֹׁאֵב מֵימֶיךָ - "*Your children, your wives, and the convert in your midst, from your woodchoppers to your water drawers.*" (Devarim 29:10)

Rabbeinu Bachya, in his introduction to Parshas Nitzavim, offers the parable of an archer who set up a target and began shooting his arrows at it. When he ran out of arrows, the target was still standing. This, he says, was Moshe's point in telling the Jews that they were "standing" before Hashem. Despite all the tribulations and suffering Klal Yisrael goes through, the arrows are finished, but our nation is not. We're still here. In his speech to them, Moshe delineated that everyone was present. It was necessary for everyone to be there because they would accept responsibility for each other. Instead of simply being "every man for himself," each

Jew is obligated to help his fellow Jew fulfill their obligations and act as a sort of guarantor. We are responsible and culpable for their failures if we could have done something to help avoid them.

By mentioning the woodchoppers and water drawers, considered lowly occupations, Moshe was highlighting the fact that regardless of one's material station in life, they are an integral part of the Jewish nation, because within each of us has a spiritual component that cannot be compromised.

A person doesn't need to be wealthy or famous or even intelligent to aid others in their service of Hashem. We all have the ability to influence others, and should be willing to accept guidance from anyone, if they are giving proper direction. This unification created a bond between us all that cannot be severed. It devolves upon us certain obligations and entrusts us with protecting the welfare of our fellow Jews, even when they themselves may not realize what they're lacking. How we behave affects others, so we must be very careful in the choices we make; they affect everyone else, too.

There is an interesting nuance of this posuk that can very easily be overlooked. The verse does not say, "You're all here, even the woodchoppers and water drawers." Rather, it says, "…from the choppers of **your** wood, to the drawers of **your** water." Everyone standing there that day now became someone to be viewed in relation to myself. He isn't "**a** woodchopper;" he is "**my** woodchopper." He doesn't just carry water; he carries **MY** water. We have to recognize that everyone in this world has a role and a part to play. They (and we) are here because Hashem wants them here. They have a place in the grand plan of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and we should be sure to respect and appreciation everyone for that – even ourselves. We should never feel that we don't matter. On the contrary, the world needs us, so it's up to us to be our best.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Honesty and the IRS

The trait of Emes—absolute integrity—shaped every aspect of **Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"L's** life, from his responsa to his daily conduct and character. In order to escape the military draft in Russia, he obtained a birth certificate listing him as five years older, a date that later appeared on his passport and other official documents upon arriving in the United States. Accordingly, when he reached the age of sixty-five according to the official documents, he began to receive Social Security checks. However, Rav Moshe would not take any money that he was not entitled to. Every month, for five years until he actually reached the age of sixty-five, Rav Moshe returned each check with no other explanation other than, "Thank you, I do not need it. When I need it, I will let you know."

Rav Moshe was extremely generous, giving a significant portion of his income to charity and carefully documenting every donation. He never returned a fundraising envelope without including at least a few dollars.

Despite earning a modest $7,000 a year, his charitable contributions drew the attention of the IRS, resulting in five audits. However, he always had proper receipts and never claimed a donation he couldn't verify. Each time, the auditor was so impressed by Rav Moshe's honest and careful record-keeping that he sent him a courteous letter of apology for the inconvenience. Still, these audits continued, likely triggered by the unusual ratio of donations to income that appeared each year on Rav Moshe's return due to his incredible generosity!

The truly rich are those who enjoy what they have."

Fear



Every year parshas Nitzavem comes out the Shabbos before Rosh Hashana. In previous years, people knew how to have fear and still be healthy and happy people. "Gilu Berada"! Is this not a contradiction? How can I **rejoice** - gilu, while **trembling** - **re'ada**? The Gemora says in Rosh Hashana **טו**: that a person needs to prepare himself and be worried as to what his lot will be for the coming year!

Rav Shimshon Pincus זצוק"ל says that it is good for a person to have a pachad. Ay, nowadays, being bepachad is not healthy, because we don't know how to rejoice together with the fear?!

The answer is, Rav Shimshon Pincus says, that the very fact that you are afraid is your zechus to be written down for a good year. "Fearing is caring." And the fear evokes the fact that you have a pachad for Yom Hadin that should give you the greatest feeling of rejoicing! You will have that fear and the fear itself should give you the biggest menuchas Hanefesh, the biggest simcha shayach, because you know that the fact that you have pachad, Hashem will sign you in the book of Chayim Tovim.

In the beginning of hilchos Rosh Hashana it is brought down to take a haircut on Erev Rosh Hashana to show that we are Boteach BaHashem that Hashem will give us a positive judgement. The question is, am I supposed to be bepachad or be boteach? According to what we are saying, the pachad itself is why we are Boteach that Hashem will have mercy on us and sign us for a great year.



Reb Moshe Reichman from Toronto, even more than being "business smart" in the monetary world, he had very same mindset of being a businessman in the spiritual world.

There was a great Jew from Toronto called, Reb Moshe Aron Auerbach. He was always involved in **חסד** and would collect money for many different causes. Because of this, he would frequent the home of Reb Moshe Reichman. Once when he went to Reb Moshe Reichman and asked for a donation, he received a check for $1000. Reb Moshe Aron however was not satisfied and bravely asked for a bigger donation. Reb Moshe Reichman told him, "Reb Moshe Aron, the next time you come, I'll give you another donation".

Reb Moshe Aron did not give up. He then proposed a '**business** deal'. He told Reb Moshe Reichman, "Reb Moshe, you know I take care of the mikvah towels here in Toronto. I take them home, wash and dry them, and return them to the Mikvah freshly laundered, every week". He calculated, "I must wash about ten thousand towels a year". "I'll make you a deal," he said, "I am offering to sell you the **זכות** of one year's worth of towels for a total of one dollar each." Without even batting an eyelash, Reb Moshe Reichman pulled out his checkbook and wrote a ten-thousand-dollar check for him.

Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, famously said that the greatness of a person is not measured by his success, but rather, by his ability to come back, to rise up after falling down, to build on failure and transform it into success. But if one never enters the ring, he has failed. Giving up without trying guarantees that he will achieve nothing.

The Weekly Vort

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky



◣ On a grey London morning in the 1930s, silence fell in the courtroom as a rabbi in long black kapote and flowing beard took the stand. The judge, an imposing figure accustomed to command, fixed his gaze on the *dayan*. When R' Yechezkel Abramsky began to speak, the court was transfixed. His voice was measured, his reasoning precise. Barristers tried to twist his words, but his clarity outmatched them. At last, the judge remarked: "This rabbi understands law better than most who appear before me. And when he speaks, one feels that truth itself has entered the room." That was R' Yechezkel Abramsky: a royal *gaon* and *dayan*. He lived through persecution and redemption, carried Torah through frost and fire, and left behind a legacy that still warms the Jewish world.

◣ R' Abramsky was born in 1886 in Dashkovtsy, Grodno province. His father, R' Yosef Leib, was a *melamed* of simple means, his mother, Chaya, a woman of iron faith. From childhood, he displayed an extraordinary thirst for Torah. A neighbor once peeked into the Abramsky home and saw young Yechezkel studying late into the night, lips moving over Gemara words by the flickering glow of a candle. The room was bitterly cold; frost clung to the window. Yet the boy was oblivious. When his father found him shivering, he whispered, "May Torah always be your warmth, my son." That blessing would one day prove literal in the Siberian wasteland.

◣ One elder recalled that by age twelve, the boy delivered a *pilpul* that left seasoned *talmidei chachomim* stunned. When asked how he managed such depth, young Yechezkel replied simply: "I listen when the Gemara speaks."

◣ As a youth, he traveled to the great Lithuanian yeshivos. In Novardok he absorbed *mussar* ideals of self-scrutiny. In Telshe he acquired breadth and discipline. Finally, he entered Vilna, where he came under the influence of R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, already the *gadol hador*. R' Chaim Ozer quickly discerned his greatness. He invited the young man into his home, discussing complex *sugyos* with him. Years later, R' Abramsky would say: "From R' Chaim Ozer I learned that Torah must dwell not only in the mind but in the heart that aches for every Jew."

◣ He also encountered R' Yechiel Michel Epstein, the Aruch HaShulchan. After an hours-long *bechina*, the elderly *posek* rose and declared: "This youth will illuminate the world with Torah." He granted him *semichah*, an unusual honor for one so young.

◣ From Vilna, R' Abramsky traveled to Brisk, where he absorbed the *derech* of R' Chaim Soloveitchik. Brisk's insistence on truth shaped him forever. Many years later, when asked in an English court whether he was indeed among the foremost halachic authorities alive, R' Abramsky answered firmly: "Yes." When challenged afterward about this boldness, he explained: "In Brisk we learned that truth is uncompromising. To deny what is true would be *sheker*. Under oath, humility cannot become falsehood." That Brisker *emes* became the bedrock of his life.

◣ In 1909, he married the daughter of R' Yisrael Yonasan Yerushalimsky, a descendant of the Netziv. She became his loyal partner through every trial, including exile and hunger.

◣ R' Abramsky served as Rav in various White Russian towns, finally in Smolensk. Even as a young man, he displayed unusual courage. When Bolshevik officials pressured him to endorse state policies, he

refused. He wrote and distributed Torah articles clandestinely, serving as one of the last beacons of authentic Torah leadership in Soviet Russia.

◣ In 1929, R' Abramsky was arrested for "counter-revolutionary activities." His crime? Teaching Torah and resisting Communist religious control. In interrogation, he was offered comfort in exchange for compromise. "Accept our recognition as rabbi, and your life will be easy." He refused: "A rabbi who cannot *pasken* according to the Torah is no rabbi. I will not sell the Torah." Beaten and humiliated, he was sentenced to five years in Siberia.

◣ The gulag was brutal beyond words. Prisoners chopped wood in forests at minus-40 degrees, with scant clothing and meagre food. Men froze standing. But R' Abramsky's soul burned with Torah. Deprived of *seforim*, he relied on his prodigious memory. He reviewed entire *masechtos* and especially clung to *Tosefta*. Day after day, trudging through the snow, he recited its words until they warmed his heart. "The *Tosefta* was my fire," he later recalled. "It gave me life."

◣ He whispered *Birchos HaShachar* each morning with tears. Later in Yerushalayim, when he saw yeshiva boys race through them, he admonished: "In Siberia, each word kept me alive. Do not squander them." A fellow prisoner mocked: "Do your prayers bring bread?" R' Abramsky answered: "Bread sustains the body; *tefillah* sustains the soul. Without the soul, the body is dust." The man was silenced.

◣ He even gave part of his ration to others weaker than himself. A survivor later testified: "In that frozen gehinnom, R' Abramsky was a warm heart for us all." There, he made a vow: "If I leave alive, I will devote myself to the Tosefta."

◣ The Torah world mobilized. R' Chaim Ozer, the Chofetz Chaim, R' Kook, and Chief Rabbi Hertz all pleaded for him. Against all odds, in 1931 his sentence was reduced, and in 1932 he was released. After brief refuge in Latvia, he accepted an invitation to London.

◣ During his imprisonment in Siberia under the Soviet regime, R' Abramsky endured extreme hardship—freezing conditions, meagre rations, and brutally enforced labour. Still, he continued to compose *chiddushei Torah* on cigarette papers and never wavered in the intensity of his *tefillos* and *limud haTorah*.

◣ In 1934, he became Rosh Av Beis Din of London. His arrival transformed it. He raised *kashrus* to uncompromising standards, reformed *shechitah* oversight, adjudicated *gittin* with brilliance, and handled complex *dinei Torah*.

◣ In one famous court case, a British barrister attempted to twist halachic terms. R' Abramsky's responses were so logical that the judge declared: "This rabbi reasons better than most barristers."

◣ He fought passionately for Shabbos. When leaders proposed leniencies, he thundered: "A nation without Shabbos is no nation. Compromise here is destruction." His words preserved Anglo-Jewry from dangerous erosion.

◣ Despite his awe-inspiring learning, he was approachable. A nervous young man once stumbled over his question. R' Abramsky reassured him: "Do not fear. Even the Gemara begins with *kushyos*."

◣ When giving *shiur*, his face shone: "Rabbosai, today's *sugya* is sweeter than honey."

◣ Once, a man asked if he could leave work early for *Mincha*. R' Abramsky quipped: "If you can leave early for football, you can leave early for the King of Kings." A *dayan* recalled: "He had the sharpest tongue, but also the warmest heart. You left his presence both trembling and uplifted."

◣ R' Abramsky's arrival in Eretz Yisrael in 1951 created a new center of gravity. He became close with the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish once remarked: "R' Abramsky has the mind of a Brisker and the heart of a Novardoker."

◣ R' Shach, who revered him deeply, once said: "R' Abramsky taught us that a *psak* is not merely *halachah*, but a statement of *emes*. And *emes* has no weakness."

◣ R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach recalled: "To enter R' Abramsky's home was to feel Shabbos even on a weekday."

◣ As president of the Vaad HaYeshivos, he fought for funding and protection of yeshivos. In debates over drafting yeshiva students, he declared: "Yehoshua won only because Moshe stood on the mountain. Without Torah, there is no army." His clarity ended the matter.

◣ After settling in Bayit Vegan, Yerushalayim, R' Abramsky continued his dedication to *limud* and *harbotzas haTorah*. Though regal in bearing, R' Abramsky was known for his kindness. One cold winter's day in Bayit Vegan, a street vendor knocked on the Abramskys' door carrying a suitcase full of sweaters—unsold, it was clear he'd been turned away many times. Rebbetzin Abramsky gently declined, saying their closet was already full. The vendor then asked simply for the Rav's *brocha*. R' Abramsky not only invited him in to give him a *brocha* but also reached into his pocket and handed him a large sum of money—before offering the *brocha*.

Afterward, Rebbetzin Abramsky asked him why. He responded that the vendor clearly needed more than a kind word—his full suitcase testified to his hardship, and he likely had a family waiting at home. R' Abramsky gave him genuine, thoughtful help—meeting the real need, not just the obvious one. R' Abramsky's chessed combined compassion with insight and foresight.

◣ R' Michal Zilber, a disciple of R' Abramsky, recounted how the Rav treated his household help with exceptional consideration. On occasion, R' Abramsky would interrupt her work to instruct her to take a rest and even encouraged her not to hurry—even though that meant he had to pay her more by the hour. He believed she'd benefit

more from working slowly and with ease, rather than exhausting herself.

◣ R' Abramsky was instrumental in establishing a reliable *eruv* in Bayit Vegan. Upon noticing deficiencies in the municipal *eruv*, he took proactive steps to ensure the community's halachic needs were met,

◣ Neighbors remembered him hours before Shabbos, dressed in white, face glowing, softly singing *zemiros*.

◣ His *Chazon Yechezkel* on *Tosefta* became a cornerstone of *limud haTorah*. Many *talmidei chachomim* hailed its precision and depth. When awarded the Israel Prize, he dismissed it: "Prizes do not matter. My joy is that I fulfilled the vow I made in Siberia."

◣ Even in frailty, he extended himself to respond to *she'eilos*: "A question of Torah must be heard with *kavod*." When a *talmid* thanked him for everything, he answered: "Do not thank me. Thank the *Ribbono Shel Olam* Who gave me a portion in His Torah."

◣ R' Abramsky was *niftar* in 1976. His *levayah* drew thousands; *Gedolei Yisroel* hailed him as a *Gadol* of unbending *emes* and boundless love for Torah.

◣ From Lithuanian *shtetl* to Siberian frost, from London courts to the streets of Yerushalayim, R' Abramsky carried one fire: the uncompromising *emes* of Torah. He was more than a towering *talmid chochom*, *dayan*, or leader. He was a *Gadol* who proved that Torah can warm even the frozen wasteland, illuminate even the darkest courtrooms, and uplift even the most broken souls.

The yahrzeit of R' Yechezekl ben R' Yosef Leib Abramsky zt"l is on 24 Elul (1976). May his merit protect us.

If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

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Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Insights Into The Torah Perspective From Great Personalities Of The Last Generation & Beyond

24 ELUL: THE CHOFETZ CHAIM

The Chofetz Chaim and… Theodore Herzl?

Many know the story of how the Chofetz Chaim played a direct role in the downfall of **Leo Trotsky**, the first leader of the Communist Party.

When Trotsky led his movement to power and terrible persecutions of Yiddishkeit began in Russia, the Chofetz Chaim declared that since Trotsky was Jewish there was a spiritual way to bring him down. He assembled — in top secret — a minyan of his close talmidim and placed Trotsky in **cherem**, invoking upon him the ultimate Divine curse.

Shortly afterwards, Trotsky fell from power, fled Russia, and was ultimately murdered. The story was recounted by, amongst others, Rav Moshe Schwab (**הובא בספר אור אלחנן**) and his brother Rav Shimon Schwab, who related the story on a Yiddish tape later transcribed in the English **"Rav Schwab on Chumash"** (p. 484).

What is much less known is the story of the Chofetz Chaim and (l'havdil) **Theodore Herzl**, founder and leader of the Zionist Movement and the World Zionist Organization.

The Chofetz Chaim fiercely opposed the Zionist idea and regarded it as entirely antithetical to Yiddishkeit. He taught that the only definition of Klal Yisroel is Torah and mitzvos, as he wrote:

"How mistaken are those people [Zionists] who think that without keeping the Torah we can be a nation… these words are the reverse of the fundamentals of Torah and it is a truly heretical opinion…" **(תורה אור פרק י' בהג"ה)**

For the same reason, he regarded as impossible any formal cooperation with the Zionist Organization founded by Herzl to represent the "Jewish nation." Rav Elchonon Wasserman (**קובץ מאמרים ח"א עמ' קנ"ד**) testifies that the Chofetz Chaim told him that the chareidim could not grant legitimacy to the Zionist Organization and the affiliated Jewish Agency by joining them — even if it would cause most of the yeshivos to close down for lack of funds.

But despite these well-documented facts, the story of the Chofetz Chaim and Herzl remains little-known until today.

The story is recounted by Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Rosenthal in a letter dated 10th Tamuz 5749, citing his rebbe, Rav Eliezer Lopian — son-in-law of Rav Moshe Schneider and one of the heads of Rav Schneider's legendary yeshiva in London.

"Mori V'rabi, the great Gaon Rav Eliezer Lopian shlita… heard testimony from a resident of Radin about a frightening story which occurred with the Chofetz Chaim. Someone entered the Chofetz Chaim's house and read before him a newspaper article written by Herzl, in which he hinted that he was the Moshiach and referenced Moshe Rabbeinu in a disrespectful way.

The Chofetz Chaim became furious. He rose from his seat and declared:
'If only I had a knife, I would stab him in the heart!' Afterwards it was said that when Herzl became ill and died, it was at that very time that the story with the Chofetz Chaim occurred — and that he died from a heart attack."

This letter came to the attention of Rabbi Binyomin Shlomo Hamburger, a scholar and researcher in Bnei Brak, who then corresponded with Rabbi Rosenthal. In a subsequent letter, Rabbi Rosenthal added:

"With regard to the story with the Chofetz Chaim: last week I spoke with Mori V'Rabi, the great Gaon Rav Eliezer Lopian, and asked his

opinion — should we repeat this story publicly? Meaning, should we publish it?

He was very happy and said that it would be a mitzvah to publicize it.
When I asked for the precise source for the story, he told me that he heard it from a Jew named Skollman from London who said that he himself had been present. Rav Eliezer Lopian had heard it thirty years earlier, and already then the one who told it was very old."

Rabbi Hamburger printed the story in his book about false messiahs (**משיחי שקר ומתנגדיהם**), where he dedicated a lengthy chapter to showing how Herzl built what was essentially a false messianic movement to bring redemption to Klal Yisroel.

The "redemption" was a secular independent Jewish state — redeemed not only from anti-Semitism but, more importantly, from HaShem and the Torah. Herzl presented himself as the long-awaited Moshiach, but in a secular version.

In this chapter (p. 622, note 147), he cites the story of how the Chofetz Chaim caused, through his spiritual powers, the early death of Herzl, who according to his biographers died at the age of 44 from heart problems.

Herzl's family came to an unhappy end. His wife died young at age 39 and was cremated at her request. Their son Hans converted to Christianity, and while travelling he forgot his mother's ashes on a train and they were never found. - The only grandchild of the family, Stephen, took his own life in 5706, and thus ended the lineage of Herzl.

"We need to start over every day, and sometimes many times each day." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

When **R' Yisrael Salanter** was in Odessa, he saw Chillul Shabbos for the first time. Upon seeing a Jew smoking he fainted. However, the next time he saw this he didn't faint. He then thought I must leave this place as he was desensitized to Chillul Shabbos.

R' Shalom Shwadron (1912-1997) once passed by a sewer which was being worked on. He was appalled upon seeing the workers there eating their meal in the sewer. After passing by them daily, he realized that one can get used to anything.



The Pasuk states by the Mabul Hashem saw the earth **והנה נשחתה**; it was corrupted. Another interpretation is that Hashem saw it was **נשחתה**, meaning they didn't feel anything was wrong with their behaviour. This can be compared today to those who use foul language as part of their vernacular without even realizing anything is wrong with what they say.

With this we can interpret the Pasuk in our Parsha in a deeper way- **ותראו את שקוציהם**...; you saw their abominations and their detestable idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold were with them.

Another meaning is that first it appeared to them as abominations and that which is detestable. Then, it was like wood and stone. Finally, it was actually like silver and gold.

"What you don't see with your eyes, don't invent with your mouth."

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

וְשַׁבְתָּ עַד־ה׳ And you will return unto Hashem. *(30:2)*

A boy was having difficulty participating in class, mostly because he was almost never present. He was extremely wild and, as a result, he was "invited" by his *rebbe* to leave the classroom since his unruliness was having a detrimental effect on everyone.

His parents had tried everything, from different *rebbeim*, to transferring him to another school, to educational and psychological specialists, all to no avail. Finally, they were referred to a *rebbe* who claimed that he could help, but it would take time. How long? It would depend on their son. What did they have to lose? He had already hit rock bottom.



Their son arrived at the new *rebbe's* office with a smirk on his face, manifesting his usual attitude. The *rebbe* sat him down and said, "As far as I am concerned, I will commence my teaching obligation only when you decide that you are prepared to learn. In other words, you will have no learning until you decide that you are ready. At the end of each day that no learning occurs, I will bang a nail into my wall.

The boy laughed at the offer. The next day, he showed up and smirked, paid his respects to the *rebbe*, whom he thought was strange (after all, what *rebbe* would not demand that his student learn?) and went along his merry way.

At the end of the day, true to his word, the *rebbe* banged nail number one into the wall. This continued daily: no pressure; no learning; another nail. Week after week, the boy came to "school,"

checked in, refused to learn, and earned another nail in the wall each day. It took an entire year for the *rebbe* to wear the boy down.

Everyone needs a challenge. When the parents/*rebbe* challenge a recalcitrant child, he will often rebel, fight back, actively or passively, but he will do something negative to demonstrate his reluctance to allow anyone to dominate him. This boy could not accept the fact that no one was challenging him.

As he was about to celebrate his one-year anniversary of doing nothing, he took one long look at the nail-studded wall; all 365 nails were in perfect sequence, and the stark realisation of one wasted year hit him squarely in the eyes.

He broke down in tears. The amount of learning he could have achieved, the year of Torah that he had lost, began to penetrate his mind, his heart, his psyche. He wept and wept, and, when he was finished, he told the *rebbe*, "I am now ready to learn."

The boy and the *rebbe* studied every day, all day, because the boy had to make up for all the time that he had needlessly wasted. At the end of every day, the *rebbe* took his claw hammer and yanked one nail out of the wall. This continued for an entire year, until all of the nails had been dislodged.

It should have been a joyous first anniversary. After all, all the nails were gone. The boy took a look at the wall and, once again, as he had one year earlier, he began to cry. The *rebbe* looked at the scene and asked, "Why are you crying?" The boy looked up at his *rebbe* and, with great remorse, replied, "I am crying because now I have a wall with 365 holes in it."

Every hole cannot be filled; the void remains once the nail is removed. Every blemish leaves a mark, a taint, a deformity.

Not so with *teshuvah*. Not only does *teshuvah* remove the "nails," but it also fills the holes; it builds a new wall.

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

"The hidden (sins) are for Hashem, our G-d (to punish), but the revealed (sins) are our and our children's (responsibility)" *29:28.*

הנסתרת לה' אלקינו והנגלת לנו ולבנינו

Rashi explains that a Jew is not expected to offer his friend rebuke for the sins that lie hidden within his heart, for how can he possibly know what another man is thinking? Therefore in the case of hidden sins, Hashem exacts retribution from the sinner alone.

On the other hand, a Jew is expected to rebuke his fellow man for the sins he does openly. Consequently, when Jews overlook other peoples misdeeds, Hasems anger is brought upon all of them.

A terrible dispute broke out in Radin. Though the **Chofetz Chaim** was by now in his later years, he rushed to the shul and approached the bimah. From there he addressed the community.



"My dear brothers!, if someone would have offered me 2,000 Rubles to deliver a drosho in shul, I would not have accepted it. I am not willing to sell my precious time for money. However, because of the situation, I am forced to speak. We must know that there will come a time when each and every one of us will be required to stand before the heavenly court and give an account of all the deeds that he performed over the course of his life."

You must be aware that strife is a very serious matter! A person may have performed scores of mitvos in his life, but if he was guilty of causing or involving himself in matters of dispute, than he is like

a person who tried filling a bag that had a large hole at the bottom- all the mitvos he performed will be lost!

I have no doubt that when the individuals from Radin who were involved in the dispute come before the heavenly court, they will attempt to clear themselves by stating the following:

We cannot be held accountable, for in our city there lived an elderly Jew by the name of Yisroel Meir whom we deemed to be a Talmid Chochom. He saw all that was traspiring, yet he remained silent.

Therefore, my dear brothers, I beg of you- do not mention my name before the heavenly court!" As these words left the mouth of the Chofetz Chaim, he broke down and wept bitterly, and his frail body trembled. The sight made a very powerful impression on the people of Radin, and the dispute was resolved immediately.

Belief in the Ribono shel Olam

A young married man living in Jerusalem began to experience symptoms of a serious illness and although at first he hoped it was nothing to be concerned with, it soon became clear that he required medical attention. He was friendly with a prominent and influential Israeli who had contacts with numerous doctors in various hospitals, and he turned to this man for advice.

The kindly man arranged for him to be evaluated by a renowned doctor and it was shortly thereafter that he received the devastating diagnosis of cancer, R"L. Treatment options were limited, he was told, as his rare form of the malignant disease was practically incurable.

The doctor was not unsympathetic, but he ultimately advised the young man to go home and spend as much of his remaining time with his wife and their little ones. The young man came home and basically retreated into himself. He became depressed and there was nothing anyone could do to raise his spirits.

His wife was a fighter and she refused to give up. Within days after the diagnosis, she contacted the same layman and asked if he had connections to speak with the Gadol Hador, **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ZT"L**. She wished to bring her husband to the Tzaddik and let him decide if and what course of treatment should be taken, rather than rely on the ultimatum of a secular doctor in a hospital.



They arranged a meeting between R' Elyashiv and the couple, with him being present as well. The older and more experienced man laid out the entire situation in heartfelt, moving terms, including the words of the doctor who insisted that there was no treatment for this form of disease.

R' Elyashiv listened with great empathy and asked a few pertinent questions when necessary. Then, he was silent for a few minutes, weighing his words carefully. Finally, he spoke. "Unfortunately, based on all that you've told me, I do not see any natural course of action. At this point, all I can tell you is to increase your tefillos and Torah study, and in this merit, may Hashem grant you a complete and speedy recovery."

The room was silent. If they were hoping for a radical new approach or kabbalah to bring about a recovery, they were sorely disappointed. With a sigh, the layman stood up and prepared to walk out. The sick man also stood up, his final hope seemingly dashed. But the young wife, a look of fierce determination etched on her face, did not stand up. Instead, she looked at the Tzaddik and spoke up.

"I realize that in a few short weeks, I will be a widow and my children will be orphans. Now they are young, but when they grow up and ask me, 'Ima, did you everything in your power to help Aba,' can I answer that I did? Is this it? With all due respect to the Rav, can I truly say that I - that we - did everything we possibly could to help?"

The desperation in her voice was palpable and the question hung in the air, as if impelled by its own gravity-defying propulsion.

Suddenly, R' Elyashiv announced, "Go to America with the sick man right now!" "Right now?" asked the man. "It is Erev Shabbos. Shall I book the tickets for Sunday, on the earliest flight out?" R' Elyashiv was adamant. "No! Right now means right now! Go this very minute to the airport and fly to America."

Without a moment's hesitation, the two men took the next flight out. Arrangements were made in a renowned hospital and the young man was successfully treated. B"H, he recovered completely!

When the story was told to **R' Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l**, he was asked what changed his father-in-law's mind? First, R' Elyashiv said there was no normal course of action, and then he urged them to run to America!

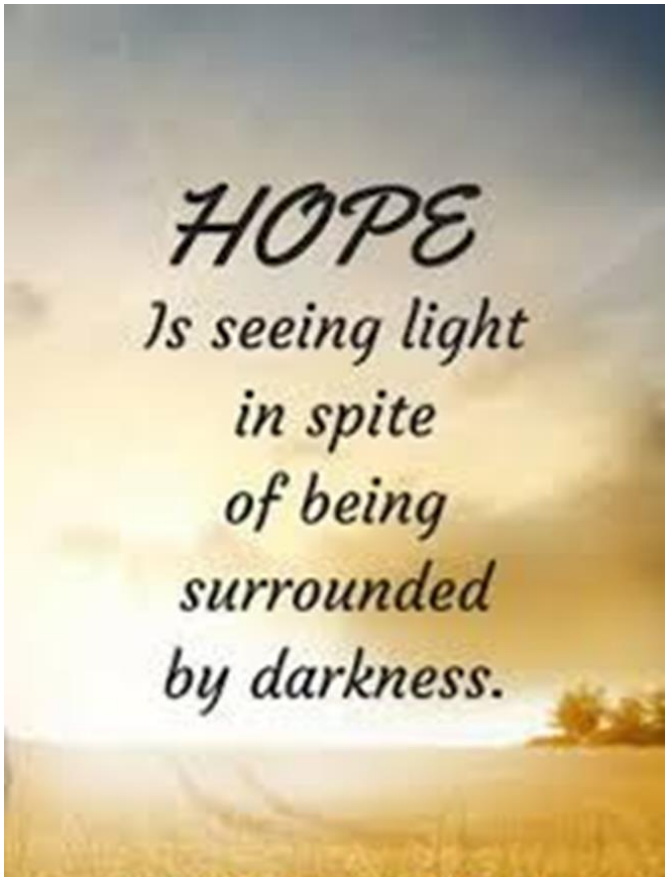
"My shver realized," said R' Chaim, "that this woman has a great deal of Emunah and belief in Hashem. She refused to rely on a doctor's diagnosis and understood that no matter what the doctor said, Hashem is always able and ready to help.

Based on the level of emotion in her voice, the Rav recognized that she truly believed there was more to do. Therefore, he quickly sent them to America because even if by nature there is no path to salvation, with true faith and belief in the Ribono shel Olam, one can actually change the course of nature - and to do this, one is permitted to be mechalel Shabbos.

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי

Rashi writes: "Why is Parshas Nitzavim juxtaposed to the curses (in last week's parsha)? Because when Bnei Yisroel heard the ninety-eight curses, besides the forty-nine stated in Vayikrah (26:14-38), they turned pale, and said, 'Who can possibly endure these?'"

Right away, Moshe called them together to calm them down, saying, "Don't be worried. Look around and see that you are all standing here today after 40 turbulent years in the desert! Don't despair! Don't ever give up!" Chazal are puzzled. Moshe seems to be changing his attitude. First, he used the curses to scare the people into behaving. Then, once they are petrified, he calms them down. It seems he is defeating his purpose by taking the sting out of the tochacha.



My machshava here is that there is a vast difference between fear and hopelessness. It's good to be realistic and apprehensive about the future. However, it is unhealthy to be hopeless and despondent. It is destructive and demoralizing.

The poorest people are not those with the least money in the bank, but the people with no hope. When you lose hope, you lose the will to live.

Moshe Rabbeinu understood this concept. When he saw that Bnei Yisroel had gone beyond the normal fear when they heard the curses losing all hope, he had to calm them down until their fear became a rational fear and not a helpless fear.

Chazal tell us that after the churban all the gates of tefillah were closed, except for the gates of tears. These gates of tears are our last resort for our tefillos and bakashos to reach Hashem.

The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l asked: If these gates are never locked, why is there a need to have gates at all? He answers that there are some tears that can never squeeze through...these are the tears of despondency and hopelessness.

A Yid must never lose hope! We are called Yehudim, representing Yehuda who understood that Hashem would never abandon him. Therefore, like him, we must never give up but always live with hope! Let's remain hopeful that Hashem will answer our tefillos.

30:19 הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה



When **Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon ZT"L** moved to Egypt in 4925 (1165), his fame as a physician spread rapidly, and he soon became the court physician to Sultan Saladin, the famous Muslim military leader, and his son al-Afdal. He also continued a private practice and lectured before fellow physicians at the state hospital. However, as often happened throughout history, non-Jewish ministers were jealous of the Rambam's success and continuously plotted against him in order to discredit him before the sultan.

On one memorable occasion, a rumour spread throughout the palace that the Rambam was planning to serve a potion to the Sultan which would kill him. Of course, as intended, the rumour reached Sultan Saladin's ears. Horrified, he ordered a thorough investigation into the matter, and it was no wonder that the investigating committee found him guilty. The sultan found the charge hard to believe. He knew Rabbeinu Moshe to be an exceptionally honest, upright person, and did not want to punish him unduly. He decided to put the matter

in the hands of Heaven. "Prepare two sheets of paper," he commanded his chief minister. "Write 'life' on one, 'death' on the other. We will give Maimoni one last chance at life. We will allow him to draw the lot and pick his own fate."

The Rambam was informed of the charges and the test he will be required to undertake to prove his innocence. All that night, he prayed to Hashem to save him from the clutches of the evil ministers, and to make his lot fall on 'life.'

In the morning, he made his way to the palace, and it was then that he realized that a plot was afloat, and he was doomed to failure. "Suppose I tell the king to check the papers before the lots are drawn," he thought to himself. "If they attempted to alter the lots, their nasty scheme will undoubtedly be revealed, but in all likelihood, the king will order a new set of papers written up, and I will once again face the risk of drawing the one that reads 'death."

Rabbeinu Moshe entered the throne room, which was filled to capacity. On a small table in front of the sultan lay a bowl with two folded squares of paper. The hall was filled with ministers, and the royal physician sensed the hatred and excited anticipation in their eyes which convinced him that his reasoning was correct. He strode up to the box where the two papers lay and unflinchingly chose one square. He didn't even open the sheet. Instead, he put the parchment into his mouth. Ignoring the stares of the crowd, he chewed and chewed, tearing the paper into shreds, and finally, swallowing the entire sheet. Now, he pointed to the paper in the bowl on the table. "Your majesty, please open the remaining parchment," he said.

A servant hastened to open the paper and held it high. The crowd strained to see. Clearly printed in thick black ink, the word 'death' could be seen. The room was filled with hushed whispers. "Clearly," thundered the sultan, bringing the strange mutterings to an abrupt end, "Maimoni chose the lot of life." A small smile threatened to

burst upon his dignified face. "I must say, though, that I admire your original way of choosing lots. Perhaps we should have spiced the paper? Do you always enjoy chewing little scraps of paper?"

Rabbeinu Moshe stepped forward. "Your Highness," he said. "This is no laughing matter. The paper I chose did not read 'life.'" He paused for emphasis. "Your minister wrote 'death' on both papers, to ensure that I would die." The sultan glowered at the minister cowering at his side.

The Rambam continued. "It is quite obvious that these ministers hate me, and that they plotted to kill me today. They interfered with the king's plan in an effort to destroy me. It is they who are the traitors, not I, for if they could stoop so low as to foil the king's justice system in order to satisfy their own envy, how can they be believed with regard to the matter I have just been tried for? Is it not preposterous to say that I attempted to murder the sultan?"

Saladin investigated the matter and found that the charges against the Rambam were baseless. The minister was thrown into prison, and the Rambam continued his work, his wisdom and integrity unblemished and unsurpassed.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

9:29 - **דגל מחנה אפרים- אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ד' אלקיכם**

The Zohar Hakodosh 2:116 says that **אמת** is eternal. Perhaps that is the meaning of the Gemara in Ta'anis 5b which says that Yaakov Avinu did not die.

The Gemara is telling us that the trait of **אמת** which Yaakov Avinu represented is eternal. There is a Remez to this in our Posuk **אתם נצבים - אתם** "is the same letters as **אמת**.This alludes to this point that Emes is eternal.

The Starfish

A fellow was walking on the beach when he saw a local native who kept leaning down, picking something up and throwing it in the water. When he got closer, he noticed that the native was picking up the starfish that had been washed up on the shore, and one at a time was throwing them back in the water, so that they wouldn't die.



The fellow told the native that he was wasting his time; there must be thousands of starfish on this beach as well as all along the coast. You can't possibly get to all of them. Don't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?

The local native smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Tell you what –made a difference to that one!"

As Jews, we must understand that even if we can't always do everything right, each little thing that we do accomplish makes a big difference. The mere fact that we are trying, shows Hashem that we care and are concerned about being better Jews. Hashem is very patient. As long as he sees that it bothers us and we are making an attempt - that itself could help us merit a shana tova - a good year.

"If everything seems to be under control, you're not going fast enough."

The Sefer Torah

A few years before he was niftar, a second cousin gave the **Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky ZT"L** a Sefer Torah from a Shul in Holland which had closed down. The Sefer Torah was in great need of repair, something which the Steipler eagerly took upon himself.

Clutching the Sefer Torah tightly to his chest, he rushed to a sofer who lived down the block. It was not easy for the Steipler to control his excitement and he wanted to know every detail of how the sofer was going to repair the Sefer Torah. Of particular concern was where the Sefer Torah would be stored. The Steipler wanted to be sure that it would be kept in an appropriately honourable place. The sofer pointed to a cabinet which was filled with all kinds of silver and jewellery belonging to his wife. "We will put it in here," he said as he began removing the jewellery from the shelf.

The Steipler quickly stopped him. "How could you?" he asked in shock. "These are your wife's possessions. How can you remove them, even for a Sefer Torah?" Although he was excited to do a mitzvah, to the Steipler middos came first.

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ד' אלקיכם - אדרת אליהו 29:9

ה - יום -There are five days in which one stands before Hakodosh Boruch Hu in judgment Two days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Hakippurim, Hoshana Rabbah, and Shemini Atzeres.

אתם נצבים היום - מנחה בלולה - 29:9

נצבים is the Roshei Taivos of – "**נוֹתני צְדָקָה בַּסתר יִנצלו מַאף**" "*Those who give charity clandestinely, will be saved from Hakodosh Boruch Hu's anger*," as it says in Mishlei 21:14 **מתן בסתר יכפה אף**

"Save a Torah" Foundation

In the city of Wheaton, Maryland, lives a rabbi by the name of Menachem Youlus, who runs a non-profit organization called the "Save a Torah" foundation.



Over the past two decades, the foundation has worked to recover more than 1,000 desecrated Torah scrolls - from Syria, Iran, India, China, as well as Eastern Europe - and restored them to their previous glory, a painstaking and expensive process.

There was one Torah that Rabbi Youlus was determined to find and restore. He had heard a story told by Auschwitz survivors: Three nights before the Germans arrived in the Polish city of Oswiecim (later called Auschwitz), the shamash of the main synagogue hid a Torah scroll in a metal box and buried it. The shamash unfortunately did not survive the war and anyone who knew about the shamash's actions did not know where he had buried the Torah.

Rabbi Youlus had little to go on when he made a pilgrimage to Oswiecim in the winter of 2000/2001, in search of the missing

Torah. He personally believed that the last place the Nazis would look would be in the town cemetery, so that was the first place he looked. He used a metal detector, because if the story that he had heard was correct, he was hunting for a metal box in a cemetery in which all the caskets were made of wood. But the metal detector did not beep. Nothing. Discouraged, he went back home to Maryland.

One of his sons, Yitzchok, then 13, wondered if the cemetery today is the same size as it was back in 1939. Incredibly, after painstaking research, they found land records that showed that the present-day cemetery was far smaller than the original one.

Rabbi Youlus travelled back to Oswiecim in 2004 with his metal detector, aiming it at the spot where the geniza - burial plot for damaged Sifrei Torah, siddurim and holy writings - had been. It beeped as he passed a house that had been built after World War II.

Excitedly, he dug near the house and found the coveted metal box. But when he opened it, he was dismayed to discover that the Torah was incomplete. In fact, it was missing four panels, and he couldn't help but wonder why the shamash would bury a Torah scroll that was missing four panels.

Sensing that these four panels had their own story to tell, he continued on in search of the missing panels. The first thing he did was place an ad in a local Polish newspaper offering a large sum of money to anyone who had parchment with Hebrew letters on it. Lo and behold, the response came the very next day - from a priest, no less!

The priest called and said, "Rabbi, I believe I know exactly what you're looking for, the four panels of a Torah scroll." The priest, a Jew by birth, was himself an Auschwitz survivor. He told Rabbi Youlus that the four sections were smuggled into the Auschwitz death camp by four different people, and they were folded and hidden to avoid being confiscated. The priest knew these four

individuals and they had given them to him before they died at the hands of the Nazis. He had held on to the them for all these years in the hope of one day reuniting them with the rest of the scroll.

That very day, the priest brought over the four panels and Rabbi Youlus compared the lettering and pagination to ensure it was an exact match. Then, he paid the priest a handsome sum.

It was quite a job to restore the Sefer Torah. Rabbi Youlus said that nearly half the Torah's lettering needed repair, work that the foundation has done over the past few years. It hadn't been used in sixty-five years, but it was still in good shape, enough to have it restored back to its full glory, to be put back into service in a synagogue.

"This really is an opportunity to look up to the heavens and say, he who laughs last, laughs best," Rabbi Youlus said. "The Nazis thought they had wiped the Jews, and Judaism, off the face of the earth. Here we are taking the ultimate symbol of Judaism and rededicating it for use in a synagogue. And we'll take it to Auschwitz, too."

The Great War

R' Shimon Schwab ZT"L once spent a memorable Shabbos in Radin in the company of the holy **Chofetz Chaim, R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen ZT"L**, in 5690 (1930). At the end of Shalosh Seudos, during which the Chofetz Chaim had eaten but a frugal meal, he announced, "It is time to recite Birchas Hamazon," and he started to bentch like a simple Jew saying each word slowly, one at a time.

This was not unusual, until he reached the words, **רחם נא ה' אלקינו על ישראל עמך** - ***"Have mercy, Hashem our G-d, on Your people Israel."*** Suddenly, it appeared as if something came over him. He cried out: "Oy, oy!" and appeared to be in pain. "**על ציון משכן כבודך**" - ***"For Zion, resting place of Your Glory."***

Again, R' Yisroel Meir's face contorted in pain and he cried, "Oy, oy!" He continued in this manner until he reached the end of the fourth and final blessing and stopped (before the Harachamans).



He then turned to his guest and said, "I see what will be in ten years from now. You don't see, but I do. A great conflagration will burn! Twelve million is child's play!"

In the middle of Birchas Hamazon, the Chofetz Chaim had a vision of future events. R' Shimon didn't understand and asked the person next to him what the Chofetz Chaim meant with these comments.

He replied, "The Rebbi always talks about it. Twelve million is the sum total of all those killed in the Great War (WWI)." R' Shimon never forgot this scene and for ten years, he watched and waited fearfully for its realization. When the second world war broke out, he knew it started to come true.

Trusting Hashem means that closed doors are not rejection- they are divine protection!

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי

Angels are referred to as "**עומדים**" - stationary, whereas people are referred to as "**הולכים**" - moving. Angels are considered perfect as soon as they are created and cannot improve themselves or grow in any way.

Man, on the other hand, is created with many imperfections, as we say each time we make the blessing: "**ברא נפשות רבות וחסרונן**" - ***"Who creates many souls and their imperfections."***

We praise Hashem for purposely creating man with all sorts of deficiencies, so that we can fulfil our life's mission by constantly striving to grow and improve. In this way, we can achieve heights far beyond angels, who do not exert any effort to achieve perfection.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski points out that since Sefer Devarim is all about rebuke, this is exactly what Moshe Rabbeinu was doing here. He was telling his beloved Jews: **אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם** - Look how lax you are just standing in one place, not improving and not progressing.

In Yiddishkeit, we are not meant to find a niche in which we feel very comfortable with ourselves and not attempt to elevate ourselves. No! We must keep moving upward and onward! The word "**נצבים**" comes from the same root as the word "**מצבה**" - a tombstone.

After 120 years of life, there is no more movement for a human being. He is buried in his tombstone. It is very relaxed, quiet and peaceful in the cemetery. But as long as we are alive, let us remember that every single moment that we are privileged to be alive is an opportunity to do, to move, to grow, to learn, to share, to improve ourselves and come closer to Hashem.

R' Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT"L (Ohel Elimelech) said:



"The gemara (Rosh Hashono 2a) tells us that the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of cattle. Jews who are separated from the Almighty throughout the year, but on the first of Elul commence to devote a portion of their time to Hashem, are compared to cattle, for they have no sense to remember the Almighty until the Day of Judgment is a month away.

Rav Elazar and Rav Shimon are more tolerant and say that those who arouse themselves a month before Rosh Hashanah are still men; those however, who wait until the first of Tishrei, on the very Day of Judgment - they are indeed as cattle."

Shabbos Treasures - Torah U'Tefilah

A father writes a story that occurred with his son who had recently left for Yeshivah in Eretz Yisroel. "In honour of the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah, my son's friend suggested that they go and buy something nice to enjoy on that Shabbos. My son gladly agreed, and together they went to the supermarket.

Before shopping, my son checked his wallet and saw that he only had 28 Shekel on him. He made careful choices for what he wanted to purchase, making sure he did not go over his budget, and when he reached this amount, he stopped shopping. His friend, however, suggested that he save some money so that he could also buy something in honour of Rosh Hashanah, which would begin the next Sunday night.

My son immediately said that our expenses for Shabbos are not lost, and Hashem returns them, therefore, he does not have to worry about having money for Rosh Hashanah because by then he will already have the money back from what he spends on Shabbos.

His friend, amazed at this, wanted to know where he learned this from, if it was written in a Sefer or if it was just a rumour, but my son replied with certainty, 'This is how I was brought up and what my father has taught me my entire life. Since it comes from my father, I do not have to question it or look to see it in a Sefer.'

The friend argued even stronger and said, 'Even if this is true and there is a reliable source for this and Hashem will return the Shabbos expenses, you still don't know when Hashem will return it to you. It could be in a month or a year! How do you know that by Sunday you will have the money that you are spending now without even thinking about tomorrow?'

While they were discussing this, they found themselves standing in line to pay when a woman holding her son by the hand asked if she could please go ahead of them as she was in a terrible hurry. My son gladly let her go ahead and he pushed all his and his friend's items back to make room for her basket. The boys then continued their conversation.

When the woman finished paying, my son panicked when he saw that the cashier had mistakenly charged his items to the woman, and he pointed this out to her. But the woman replied, 'There is no mistake here, I have already paid for you!'

My son asked, 'But why did you do this?' She answered, 'Simply because I wanted to', not hiding her enjoyment. She then approached the security guard and showed him the receipt that she had paid for him so that he would not be bothered when leaving the supermarket to show proof of payment, and she hurried on her way.

My son stood in amazement, as he had still not yet taken the money out of his wallet, and his friend stood open-mouthed in that he had received clear rebuke on the topic of spending for Shabbos in such an immediate fashion! Another amazing aspect to this was that the items of my son and his friend were placed side by side on the counter, and inexplicably, the woman only paid for the items of my son, and not his friend.

It was a clear message from Hashem that He covers all Shabbos expenses, and that He can be trusted to pay it back immediately!" (***Tiv HaHashgachah***)



R' Eliyahu Lopian ZT"L would say:

"Chazal tell us that if Moshe had prayed immediately, Hashem would have allowed him to enter Eretz Yisroel. We learn from this that we should not put off praying when a need arises. We should pray immediately!"

Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l related, "Woe is to a person that fails to recognize their flaws because then they do not know what is required to heal, but ay vavoy (that means super Oy in Yiddish) to a person that doesn't know their strengths because then that would overlook the tools available.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

מזרחי – 14:29 **ואת אשר איננו פה** explains that this refers to those of Klal Yisroel who would be born in the future. It must be, for it could not refer to those who were alive at that time and were not there at Har Sinai, for the Torah explicitly states in Posuk 9 –**כלכם** – ***"all of Klal Yisroel were there."***

Rabeinu Be' Chaya says the Covenant between Hakodosh Boruch Hu and Klal Yisroel was binding even upon unborn generations who were not physically present at Har Sinai to enter into it. The reason is because parents and children are like trees and their branches. Just as the future potential of all branches is rooted in the tree, so too all of the children to come forth from those who were at Har Sinai are rooted in those individuals, and therefore, all of the progeny of those who were at Har Sinai are bound by the Covenant of the parents – the tree.



All Jewish Neshomos were present at this Covenant, just as they were at Har Sinai when the Torah was given. Although the bodies were not born yet, being that their Neshomos were there, they too are bound by the Covenant.

כי את אשר ישנו פה עמנו עמד היום לפני ד' אלקינו, ואת אשר איננו פה ילקוט האזובי 14:29

The last letters of the words, **אתַ אשרַ ישנַו פהַ** spell **תורה**, and the last letters of the words **ואתַ אשרַ איננַו פהַ** also spell **תורה**. This is to teach us that they all received the Torah.

רופא חולי עמו ישראל

It would seem that non-Jews also become ill and are healed. Does Hashem heal only Jews, while the others are left to the elements, the doctors, to good fortune?

Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl, applies the notion that, concerning non-Jews, their fate is destiny related. Whether inscribed in the mazalos, astrological stars, or some other dimension of reality, there is some fate which is almost impossible for the gentile to overcome.

The destiny of the Jew is above teva, nature, and above mazal, zodiac signs. As Hashem cannot be defined, so, too, the destiny of the Jew cannot be defined, because it is directly overseen by Hashem. Thus, when a gentile becomes ill, his cure is under the realm of nature and mazal; if it is his mazal to become well, he will live. Otherwise, he succumbs to nature.

The Jew, however, is above mazal and teva. No diagnosis is final. Only Hashem's word is final.

Furthermore, there is Hashgachah Pratis, Divine supervision, which supersedes teva and mazal. Therefore, even with regard to the healing process, the Jew will suffer only what is designated for him by Hashem. It is never the illness or the doctor; it is Hashem. He is our Divine Healer.

A Person is Where his Thoughts Are

כִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֶשְׁנֹו פֹּה עִמָּנוּ עֹמֵד הַיֹּום לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקינוּ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ פֹּה עִמָּנוּ הַיֹּום ***"But those who are standing here with us today and those who are not … "*** (29:14).

The Chasidim tell the story of **R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**, who once approached a certain Chasid as he terminated the Amidah, and greeted him with a hearty 'Sholom Aleichem!'

'Whilst you were busy Davening', he explained to the surprised Chasid, 'you visited the market in Leiptzig and a number of other interesting places, in which case you deserve a 'Shalom Aleichem' '.

As a matter of fact, he added, Moshe had the same thought. And it was because he suspected that some of the people were there in body only, that he referred to "those who are standing here with us today (in thought, as well as in body) and those who are not … " (who may well be present in body, but whose thoughts are somewhere else).

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ 30:14

The matter is very near to you, in your mouth, and in your heart, to perform it



A man once had a strong urge to see Eliyahu HaNavi, and he went to his Rav to discuss this with him. The Rav said, "Next week will be Rosh Hashanah. Travel to a certain city and stay by a certain widow, and there you will see Eliyahu HaNavi. However, make sure you bring along a lot of provisions, since this woman is very poor, and she is not able to put up guests."

The man was very pleased. He loaded a wagon with food and drink and went on his way with his wife to that city. When he arrived, he asked the townsfolk for directions to the house of that certain

widow. They told him that there were two widows with the same name in that city, one lived alone and the other one had four children.

The man thought to himself, certainly, the Rav meant the widow with four orphans since he told me to bring a lot of provisions. The man went to the house of the widow and asked to stay with her for Rosh Hashanah. "How can I host you?!" replied the widow nervously, "I am having difficulty feeding my children, how can I feed you?" the man replied, "Do not worry. I have brought enough food for all of us." She said, "And where will you sleep? I do not have a bed for you." He answered, "Don't worry. My wife and I will sleep on mattresses on the floor." The widow agreed and for the first time in their lives the children celebrated the holiday with much splendour and the joy was immense.

This is how they spent Rosh Hashanah. After Yom Tov, the man went home, went back to his Rav, and said, "I did as you instructed, now how can I be able to see Eliyahu HaNavi?" The Rav was amazed and said, "What?! The entire time you were there you did not see Eliyahu HaNavi? If this is so, Yom Kippur is approaching. Pack your things and go back to her, then on Yom Kippur you will certainly merit to see Eliyahu HaNavi!"

So once again, the man loaded his wagon with much food and drink and went to the house of the widow. When he arrived at the house, he overheard the four orphans asking their mother, "How will we be able to fast on Yom Kippur? We are hungry, and it has already been a week since we ate." Their mother replied, "My dear children, On Rosh Hashanah, HaKadosh Baruch Hu sent us Eliyahu HaNavi, and he brought much food with him. Perhaps for Yom Kippur as well we will be worthy and Eliyahu HaNavi will come back and bring us food for the Seudah Ha'mafsekes."

Just at that moment the man opened the door and went in. He then understood an amazing thing, you do not have to go far to look for Eliyahu HaNavi. The secret is that Eliyahu HaNavi is hidden within

every person and can be seen with how one interacts with his fellow man.

The Posuk mentions three things, mouth, heart, and deed. Eliyahu HaNavi can be a part of us in all these ways.

By saying the right thing at the right time, one can make someone feel better. By thinking of another at the right time, he can be considerate of another. By doing something for others he can help another person.

This is how the Torah and Eliyahu HaNavi can be a part of us in speech, thought, and deed!

Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



Moshe forewarns us that even after we have strayed, we can choose to repent and return to Hashem (30:1).

The Ohr HaChaim explains that repentance is not limited to those who are generally good and make small mistakes. It is available even to those who have spent much of their efforts sinning, as is evidenced in Moshe's referencing the curses.

No matter how far we may have strayed, Hashem awaits us with open arms.

Treating Every Jew Like One's Own Child

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם ...רָאשֵׁיכֶם שִׁבְטֵיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כֹּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל טַפְּכֶם נְשֵׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ "The elders of your tribes, all the men of Yisrael ... your children ... " (29:9/10).

The Torah juxtaposes your children next to all the men of Yisrael, says the **Ba'al ha'Turim**, to teach us that a Jewish leader should bear every Jew the same affection that he bears his own child.

Indeed, says the Besht, as long as a Jew loves his own son more than he loves every other Jew, he has not reached the half-way mark of Ahavas Yisrael.

Just for the Reward

הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטָּף "Assemble the people, the men, the women and the children" (31:12).

'The men, to learn', says Rashi, 'and the women to hear'. But why the children?

'To give reward to those who bring them', he answers.

If all the men and all the women had to gather in Yerushalayim, asks the **Yalkut ha'Urim**, is it not obvious that they had to bring the children with them? That, he answers, is Rashi's question! Seeing as the children had to come anyway, why does the Torah find it necessary to mention them?

The answer to that is 'in order to reward those who bring them'. Like the Mishnah at the end of Makos states 'Hashem wanted to give Yisrael the opportunity to increase their merit, so he increased for them Torah and Mitzvos (transformed mundane acts into Mitzvos)'.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב ל:טו ***"See, I have placed before you today life and good…"*** (30:15)

Rebbi Shlomo Ephraim M'Lunzitz, the author of the **Kli Yakar**, asks: Why does the Torah write the order of life before good, shouldn't the Pasuk write good before life, as a person's good deeds merit that he lives a long life?

The Kli Yakar answers that the Torah is warning us that we should not have the intention to do good deeds in order to live long, but rather, our intention should be that we live in order to do good deeds. (***Parperaos LaTorah***)

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

Shabbos Parashas Nitzavim is always the *Shabbos* before Rosh Hashanah, however, unlike every other *Shabbos* before *Rosh Chodesh*, this *Shabbos* is not *Shabbos Mevorchim*— the *Shabbos* that we would bless and announce the New Moon.

The reason for this is to confuse the *Satan*, who is trying to accuse *Klal Yisrael*, and that he should not know when Rosh Hashanah is. A hint to this is in a *Pasuk* from *Tehilim* that we say on Rosh Hashanah. **תקעו בחודש [בראש חודש] שופר בכסה ליום חגנו**

תהילים פא:ד , ***Blow the Shofar at the moon's renewal*** *(i.e. Rosh Chodesh) at the time appointed for our festive day* (*Tehilim* 81:4). The festive day (i.e. Rosh Hashanah, which is also *Rosh Chodesh*) should be **מכוסה** , *covered*, hidden so that we do not announce it publicly. (***Parperaos LaTorah***)

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]



You Can Do It! There is Nothing Stopping You!

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ

"The thing [Torah] is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it". (Devorim 30:14)

In 1977, Laura Schultz, 63, was in the kitchen of her home in Tallahassee, Florida, when she heard her 6-year-old grandson screaming from the driveway outside. Schultz ran to the door to find her grandson pinned beneath the rear tire of a full-size Buick. Giving no consideration to limitations or barriers, Schultz ran to the car, used one hand to lift the rear of the vehicle and used the other hand to drag her grandson to safety.

For years, Schultz refused to speak about the incident. After finally agreeing to an interview with peak performance coach Dr. Charles Garfield, Schultz was asked why she'd remained silent about her miracle.

Schultz revealed that the incident had scared her and reminded her that she'd wasted most of her life living far beneath her true potential.

With a little coaching from Garfield, Schultz returned to college, earned her degree and went on, at nearly 70 years of age, to fulfil her long-held dream of becoming a college professor.

Whatever you may now be telling yourself that you can't do, do it! It's never too late to summon forth the full extents of your G-D-given potential.

The ***Midrash Tanchuma*** (Parshas Vayelech) brings a story involving the prophet Eliyahu. Eliyahu was once travelling on a road where he met a man who mocked and scorned him. Eliyahu asked the man what he would respond on Judgement Day, when he would be asked why he didn't learn Torah. The man had a quick response. He would say that Hashem did not give him the necessary wisdom or understanding to be able to learn Torah. Clearly if he didn't have the ability, he couldn't be blamed for not learning.

Eliyahu asked the man what he did for a living. The man said that he was a fisherman and hunter of birds. Eliyahu then asked the man how he learned to take flax and weave it into nets for his fishing and hunting. And, who taught him how to hunt effectively and how to successfully sell his catch. To that the man responded that Hashem gave him the wisdom to do those things. Eliyahu said, "For … [all this] Hashem gave you wisdom and understanding, but to acquire Torah Hashem did not give you understanding?!" The Torah says, "*The thing [Torah] is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it*". (Devorim 30:14)

Immediately, after hearing these words, the fisherman reflected for a moment and started crying bitterly. He realized that Eliyahu was correct. He had lived life fooling himself that he was not capable of learning Torah. Eliyahu told him not to get depressed (see the commentary of the **Eitz Yosef**). Everyone will be faced with the same question of why they didn't learn Torah (or why didn't they do certain mitzvos) when they truly had the ability to do so.

The yetzer hara tricks us into thinking we are incapable of learning Torah (or to learn more Torah) or doing certain mitzvos, when, truthfully, we <u>do</u> have the ability to do so. Each one of us has many G-D given abilities. As Rosh Hashana approaches, we should stop for a moment to think. Then we will realize that we can <u>all</u> apply ourselves to reach greater spiritual heights. We can all improve our actions, in some way, and come closer to Hashem. If we haven't yet

started, we should not become discouraged. Hashem eagerly awaits our sincere improvements (and repentance) as a loving father waits for a child.

We all have latent abilities that we can harness. All we need to do is stop for a moment and think. We can use those capabilities to come closer to Hashem by learning Torah, doing mitzvos, and improving our middos.

Drill "My" Boat -Not "Your" Boat



הַנִּסְתָּרֹת לַה' אֱלֹקינוּ וְהַנִּגְלֹת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד־עוֹלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת

"The hidden [sins] are for Hashem, but the revealed [sins] are for us and our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah." (29:28)

Zalman, Yisacher, and Beryl went on a boat. When they reached the middle of the ocean, Beryl took an awl and began making a hole in the boat. Yisacher laughed and calmly said to Zalman, "Poor Beryl. Doesn't he realize that he will drown if he finishes that hole?" Zalman shouted to Beryl to stop. Then he turned to Yisacher and said, "Don't be a fool! If Beryl would succeed in making a hole, **WE WOULD ALL DROWN!"**

The entire Jewish nation was standing before Hashem to enter a covenant with Hashem. The contract was that we would be Hashem's people and we would accept only Hashem as our G-D.

The covenant of having Hashem as our G-D, places upon us a responsibility for our fellow Jew. If one Jew sins (and we are aware

of it) and we don't try to stop him, we too will be punished for that sin.

All Jews are **ONE.** We have a natural feeling to help a fellow Jew in need because he is part of our extended family.

When a young Jewish girl was lost in the woods, after a school hiking trip, hundreds of Jews; "strangers" drove upstate to help in the search. Countless thousands around the world davened and said Tehillim for her safe return. The next day the Hatzalah radios announced she was found, unharmed. Jews, "strangers", the World-over, cried when hearing this good news about their "sister".

Besides feeling closeness to and oneness with our fellow Jew, we have a responsibility to him and to the entire Jewish People. All Jews are in the "rowboat of life" together. Our destiny is determined by the collective actions of all Jews. If one Jew sins, that affects the rest of us too.

Rav Yisroel Salanter used to say that one Jew's sin affects Jews elsewhere. A sin done by a Jew in America can affect a Jew in Israel. Similarly, a mitzvah done by a Jew in America can protect and save a Jew in Israel (or elsewhere). We should keep in mind the **difference that each of us can make** by strengthening our mitzvos and being more careful of our sins. We must always look to strengthen the Torah values of our fellow Jews. When a Jew sins, we can't turn-away and say, "It's his problem". It's **OUR** problem! We must instruct and encourage in a nice way without embarrassing him. If our friend is about to eat non-kosher or to eat kosher without saying a bracha, or about to speak improperly, or to disturb learning or to desecrate Shabbos , we can't turn our backs. We can't say, "I'm too embarrassed to say something to him".

Reminding others, in a nice way, to do the right thing will benefit the collective destiny of all Jews.

Shabbos Treasures The Precious Gift of Shabbos

Once, a young man was traveling home from out of town, trying to arrive in time for Shabbos. He passed through Radin on *Erev Shabbos* and realized that he would not make it home in time for Shabbos. He decided to stay in Radin for Shabbos, and merited to stay at the house of a relative of his, the ***Chofetz Chaim***.



The young man was exhausted from his travels and decided to take a quick nap before Shabbos started. When he woke up, he saw that it was already very dark outside. The *Chofetz Chaim* noticed that he was up and greeted him with a warm '*Gut Shabbos*!' He told him to *daven Kabbalas Shabbos* and *Ma'ariv*, and then they would have the *seudah*. After he finished *davening*, the *Chofetz Chaim* said *Kiddush* and they washed and had the meal. The young man wondered where the rest of the family was, but thought it was impolite to ask.

After *Bentching*, the *Chofetz Chaim* wished him a *Gut Shabbos* again, and left to go to sleep. The young man was not tired, so he walked around the house a little. He was shocked when he saw the clock in the kitchen read 4:00 in the morning! He thought to himself that the clock must be wrong, it can't be that late! He went to his room and went to sleep. In the morning, he asked the *Rebbitzen* if the clock in the kitchen was accurate, and she said it was. He asked her what happened when Shabbos started and she told him, "You were sleeping so soundly when Shabbos started that the *Chofetz Chaim* didn't want to wake you. He also refused to start the *seudah*

without you, so I made *Kiddush* for the rest of us. We ate and then we went to sleep. The *Chofetz Chaim* stayed up and learned while he waited for you to get up and have the *Shabbos seudah* together!"

L'Maaseh

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz, *Shlit"a*, relates a great story of *Hashem's Hasgachah*, Divine Providence (*Tiv Ha'kehilah*):



A huge fire broke out at sea on board a US Navy ship. The flames were so great that the rescue helicopters could not approach the ship to rescue anyone because of the intense heat that was emitted even far away. In that fire, more than three thousand sailors died. The incident happened a number of years after the holocaust on a Friday night. People could see the raging flames at sea from land, a distance away.

Rav Yisroel Chaim Kaplan, *zt"l*, was the *Mashgiach* of *Bais Midrash Elyon* in the United States, at the time, and he was visiting *Eretz Yisroel* on this *Shabbos*. He came to a *Yeshivah* for *Shalosh Seudos* to give a talk to the boys, and he began with a question for the boys, "Did you hear about the fire on the ship?" The boys replied that they did. The *Rav* asked, "What did you do at the moment that you heard about the fire?" The boys' answer was, "What could we do? We had no way to help." The *Rav* was shocked at their answer.

He said, "I will tell you what I did! I did not close my eyes the whole night! I cried and I said *Tehilim* with pleading, because perhaps

there was one Jew on that ship, and who knows, that in the merit of my crying and *Davening*, one Jew would be saved! This saved person would get married and bring a child into the world, and this child would do *Teshuvah*, and from this child will emerge complete generations who will serve *Hashem*!"

Many years later, someone told over the following: "At the *Sheva Brachos* of my father, when my grandfather on my father's side spoke with a relative on my mother's side, my mother was the *Kallah*, the pieces of a bigger story started to come together. During the conversation, my grandfather told him that he had been on that ship that caught fire, and he was rescued. He also said that he had been awarded a medal of bravery, because after he was already saved, he returned to danger and saved his brother who was also on the burning ship.

The other relative immediately began to ask details of the fire, and without a doubt it happened on a Friday night, and it became clear that this was the burning ship he heard about back in *Yeshivah*.

He immediately became overcome by strong emotions, and he asked for permission to speak to the crowd. He said to everyone the whole story that he heard from the *Mashgiach*, Rav Kaplan, and how he emphasized the power of *Tefilah* of a Jew who never knows what effect it will have. Clearly, though, those *Tefilos* were answered as he was able to see the effectiveness of them, and that two Jewish men were saved who ended up with children joining his family.

Many years later, I, the grandson, heard this story from my father. I was very moved by it and I decided that if *Hashem* would *Bentch* me with a son I would name him after the *Mashgiach*, Rav Yisroel Chaim, out of gratitude that my grandfather was rescued in the merit of his *Tefilos*. *Baruch Hashem*, I was soon *Bentched* with a son.

The day of the *Bris* arrived, and I had a difficult decision before me. **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, *zt"l***, was my father's *Rebbe*, and the day of the *Bris* fell out on his *Yahrzeit*, and Rav Chaim was always a

special guiding light for our family. On the other hand, there was the gratitude I felt toward Rav Yisroel Chaim Kaplan. At first, I thought to name him after Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, and with *Hashem's* help, I would name our next son after Rav Kaplan, but then I realized that both Rabbanim had the name 'Chaim', so I could not name two boys with the same name. In the end, we decided to name our son after Rav Kaplan in thanks for the *Zechus* of his *Tefilah* that Friday night so many years ago which helped establish upstanding generations who followed the *Torah*.

Later, my father asked me for an explanation for this decision, and I told him that I thought that if I were to ask Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz what he would think I should do, he would have told me that gratitude comes first, and we should name after Rav Kaplan. When he heard this, my father cried tears of emotion and said, "that is exactly what Rav Chaim once said to me!'"

Chabad.org



"אתם נצבים היום" ***"You are standing today."*** **(29:9)**

It is customary on *Motza'ei Shabbat Parshat Nitzavim* to begin reciting *Selichot*. (In the event that there is no opportunity to recite four *Selichot* before *Rosh Hashanah*, we begin a week earlier.)

Is there a hint for this in the Torah? The words **אתם נצבים היום** — "You are standing today" have the numerical value of 694, which is the same as that of the words "**לעמוד לסליחות**" — "To rise for *Selichot*." (**מטה משה ח"ה סי' תשע"ט**)

L'Maaseh

When ***Rebbetzin* Batsheva Kanievsky's** mother, Shaina Chaya, was a young girl, her mother, Tziporah Chana, headed out to the market one cold day and left Shaina Chaya, who was one year old, in the care of her older brothers. Right when she stepped out of her house, a poor man who was unfamiliar to her, approached Tziporah Chana and asked her if he could please have a drink. She asked him if he didn't mind waiting a few minutes while she went to pick up a few things from the market, but she added that if he was very thirsty, she would go get him a drink immediately. - He replied to her, "Please, I really need it now."



So Tziporah Chana hurried back into her house to get him a drink. While she was there, she checked on her children. The boys, who were supposed to be watching Shaina Chaya, were caught up in a game and were totally neglecting their babysitting duties, and meanwhile, the one year old, Shaina Chaya had fallen facedown into a bathtub full of water!

Tziporah Chana quickly pulled Shaina Chaya out of the water and calmed down the coughing child. Then she quickly got a drink for the poor man and went out to thank him, but he had disappeared! *Rebbetzin* Tziporah Chana knew that her willingness to do *Chesed* helped save her baby's life.

When **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank** heard about the miraculous way that Shaina Chaya had been saved from drowning, he said that since such a miracle occurred, he believed the girl was destined for greatness. She then went on to build a dynasty of *Torah* and *Avodas Hashem*!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Each moment was precious to **Rav Moshe Feinstein.** On days where we read the Torah at *davening*, Rav Moshe would learn *Mishnayos* until someone was called to the Torah and said the *Brachos*.

When *laining* would begin, he would follow along in a *Chumash*, and as soon as the reading ended until the next reading began, he would learn *Mishnayos* again. To Rav Moshe, each moment was an opportunity!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

The *Shem Mi'Shmuel* explains that the *Kedushah* of *Shabbos* lingers the entire week and its influence carries us throughout the week until the next *Shabbos* comes. Therefore, on the *Shabbos* before a new month, we *Daven* that the power of *Shabbos* should spill over into the new month as well.

On the *Shabbos* before Rosh Hashanah, which is a new month *and* a new year, we certainly should *Daven* on the *Shabbos* prior to it, yet we don't. The reason is because Rosh Hashanah is a new beginning, as it says in the *Yerushalmi*, *Zeh HaYom Techilas Ma'asecha, today is the beginning of Your work*. Just like when *Hashem* created the world there was no *Shabbos* before it, so too Rosh Hashanah is a new beginning— as if nothing took place previously.

This teaches us that we have a chance to start anew, without any consideration of being locked into to our previous patterns!

The Futility of Worry

It's a good thing that worrying doesn't help, for if worrying would help, people would worry even more. ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

The Torah Any Times Newsletter

Rabbi Yossi Mizrachi - The Greatest Support

ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך - *And you shall choose life, so that you will live, you and your offspring* (Devarim 30:19)



After I once delivered a lecture to a large group of men and women, a young girl approached me. Introducing herself as Regina, she mentioned that she was a religious, twenty-year-old girl looking for a nice boy to marry. Would I perhaps know anyone suitable for her? Asking that she write down some basic information about herself, I said that I would look into the matter.

Three months later I returned to the same place to speak to around one hundred boys and girls. After the lecture, as everyone was taking leave, I noticed one of the girls who I remembered as being friends with Regina. Calling her over, I said, "Where is Regina? Did she come tonight?" "Rabbi," the girl replied, "Regina recently got married." As I heard those words, I let out a big smile. "Baruch Hashem. It's wonderful that in just a few months she found her husband and now is married."

But the girl had more to say. "Rabbi, do you want me to tell you who she married?" As soon as she said that, I knew she had a good story to tell. And so, with a large crowd now surrounding her, the girl began to reveal Regina's story: - Regina came to America from Russia as a young girl with her parents. Settling in New York, her parents struggled to financially ground themselves and remained unsure if they would be able to send Regina to a Jewish school. They seriously considered sending her to a public school, although they were well aware that there was a risk of assimilation. Their ideal would be to

send her to a Jewish school where she could retain her Jewish identity. But where would they procure the money?

Looking into the matter further, they soon discovered that there was there was an organization in New York which helped provide financial aid for poor Russian children to attend Jewish schools. It was exactly what they needed. Heading over to the organization, after the parents explained their situation, they were told what they wished to hear. "There is a philanthropist here in Brooklyn. See if you can arrange that he help you and your daughter." Thanking the organization for their information and reference, the parents contacted the man whom they hoped would kindly help their cause.

After explaining to the man how they recently arrived in America from Russia, they pleaded their case before him. "If our daughter does not attend a Jewish school, we are afraid she will assimilate.' Taking to heart Regina's predicament, the man agreed to fully support her schooling.

Regina grew up to be a fine religious girl. Learning and growing spiritually, she inculcated beautiful Jewish values and grew in knowledge and appreciation of *Yiddishkeit*. For sixteen years of education, this man supported Regina and took care of all her needs. And then the day came, three months ago, when she came to hear you speak. After listening to the lecture, she approached you to see if you could assist her in finding a *shidduch*. Afterwards, she continued on to the library.

Arriving at the library, she was approached by another Jewish girl who was clearly irreligious. "I see that you are religious," the other girl said. "Are you looking to get married? I think I have a nice boy for you." Standing there startled, Regina wasn't sure what to say. She assumed that the "nice boy" referred to by the girl was irreligious and far different than herself in terms of Torah observance and ideals. "I'm sorry," Regina said, "but I had in mind a boy who is religious and spent time learning in a yeshiva."

As soon as Regina said that, the girl became all excited. "Oh, I have the perfect boy for you – my brother!" Now even more confused than before, Regina could not imagine this girl's brother to be significantly different than the first boy she mentioned. "My brother is a *baal teshuva* and currently studying in a yeshiva," explained the girl. "He is also looking for someone religious who values Torah and wants to raise a Jewish family." After hearing what the girl really meant, the proposal sounded good. "Okay," said Regina, "if he would like, we can meet."

Going out with the boy, Regina took a liking to him. He was a sweet boy who was serious about his learning and had proper ideals about *Yiddishkeit* and raising a family. It wasn't before long that they were intently planning to get married.

It was now time for the parents to meet each other. Receiving the address of the boy's parents, Regina's mother and father made their way over to their home. When they arrived, they were surprisingly taken aback. The house was beautiful and spacious. It was clear that this family was wealthy. Being warmly welcomed into the house, the kindness exuded and hospitality offered by the parents was more than ever expected. And indeed, Regina's mother and father were astounded when they realized who in fact the boy's father was.

He was none other than the very man who had supported Regina for sixteen years of school.

With every act of kindness we perform, we are impacting the course of another's person's day, week or perhaps life. Caring for a fellow Jew can accomplish no less than building and saving a life and forever shaping their future. And who can know, sometimes that very individual we extended ourselves for will become none other than our very own daughter-in-law.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS NITZAVIM

The Baby Carriage



Rav A. Leib Scheinbaum writes a story that shows how deeply committed one can be in his belief, and to what extent this faith will carry him. It is a story about two Chasidim who would visit their Rebbe every Succos, and each year, they would stop overnight at the same inn.

One year, the innkeeper approached them humbly and said, "You know, I am neither a Chasid nor a student of your Rebbe, but I have a great favor to ask of you. My wife and I have been married for ten years, and unfortunately, we have not yet been blessed with a child. Can you please ask the Rebbe to Daven for us?" The Chasidim agreed to do so.

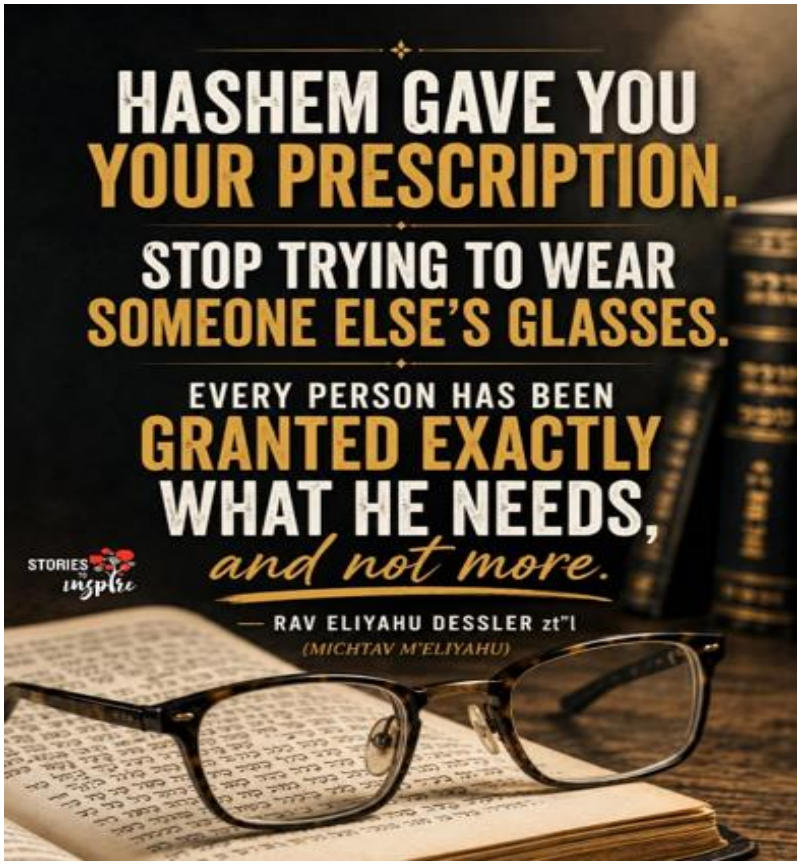
The very next morning, the innkeeper's wife began walking around the neighborhood with an expensive baby carriage. When her friends came over to wish her a 'Mazel Tov', she explained that while she did not yet have a child, she soon would, since the Rebbe was going to Daven for her!

Hearing this, the two Chasidim were embarrassed, because they knew that Tefilos did not always produce the desired results. They said nothing and continued on with their journey, and faithfully carried out their mission when they arrived at their Rebbe.

When the two Chasidim returned the following year to the inn, there was a Bris in progress, as the innkeeper and his wife recently just had a baby boy. The innkeeper was quite elated and thankful to have these Chasidim, and he treated them as guests of honour.

Later on, when the Chasidim arrived at the Rebbe's home, one of the Chasidim entered the Rebbe's office and complained, "Rebbe, you do not even know the innkeeper! Yet, you Davened for him, and it was successful. I have been your trusted student since I was a child. I visit you every year just as my father did before me. Yet, I am married for twenty years, and I have made the exact same request of you, and my wife and I have still not had children. Rebbe, is this fair?" The Rebbe took his student's hands and looked him in the eyes, and asked, "During all those twenty years, did you ever go out and buy a baby carriage? How great was your faith in the power of Tefilah in comparison to that of the innkeeper's wife?"

Rav Scheinbaum taught that trust in Hashem, must be unequivocal. We either believe, or we do not. To believe when it's convenient, to trust when there is no other alternative, is'nt trust. It is self-serving and hypocritical. When we say we believe and we express our trust, we must be prepared to purchase the baby carriage!



Why Davening in a Minyan is Worthwhile



Rav Yissochar Frand, Shlit"a, gives a Mashal about the importance of Davening with a Minyan, a quorum of ten men.

At a final exam in a university, the proctor said to all those taking the exam, "There are three hours to complete this final. After that, all papers are to be handed in, otherwise they will be disqualified."

Three hours passed and everyone returned their exam papers, except for one student, who passed the deadline by about ten minutes. He then tried to hand in his paper, but the proctor said to him, "You went passed the allotted time for the exam, and now I cannot exam accept your paper."

The student remarked, "Excuse me sir, but do you know who I am?"

The proctor replied, "I don't know and I don't really care. It doesn't matter though, because I still can't take your paper."

The student repeated, "Are you sure you don't know who I am?"

The proctor again explained that he didn't have any idea who he may be, and that even if he did, it wouldn't make a difference to his decision, as he was refusing to accept the exam paper late.

The student then quickly lifted up some of the exam papers that were handed in on the proctor's desk, placed his exam paper right in the middle of all the other papers, and it immediately got lost in the pile.

He then said to the proctor, "It's good you don't know who I am," and then he quickly walked out of the room.

Rav Frand says that the same applies with our Tefilos. It's not that Hashem doesn't know who we are, Hashem is very aware of who we are.

But if we Daven with a Minyan, even those that wouldn't normally merit to have their Tefilos heard, can slip their requests in together with the requests of the others who are there, who may be more deserving to have their Tefilos answered, and his Tefilos will be answered along with them!

Stronger Than a Cossack - Yerachmiel Tilles



R' Mordechai Dov of Hornsteipel fell ill with a violent cough. He went to consult doctors in the city of Kiev and was told that it would be necessary to sear one spot on his body with a burning-hot lance. The doctors told him in advance that the treatment was extremely painful; so painful, in fact, that the patient had to be tied to a chair in order not to move during the process.

"There will be no need to tie me," the Rebbe answered quietly. "I will not move."

The doctor began the treatment and the Rebbe, true to his word, did not move a muscle. He did not emit as much as a groan as his skin was scorched with a searing-hot metal stick.

Amazed at this incredible willpower, the doctor remarked to the Rebbe's son, who was standing nearby, that just the day before he had performed the identical treatment on a Russian Cossack. The

moment the hot lance had touched the Cossack's skin, he had jumped out of his seat -- ripping open the restraint that bound him -- and escaped through the window.

The Rebbe, who overheard, surprised them all with his response: "Believe me, when a Jew comes to me and pours out the troubles that weigh down his heart, when he so desperately needs help and there is no way to help him, that pain burns more fiercely within me than even a burning-hot lance."



Sha'arei Eliyahu - The Power of UNITY

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם You are all standing this day before the Hashem, your G-d 29:9

We know that when the Torah says the word **היום** it is talking about Rosh Hashanah. This Parasha always comes out the week preceding Rosh Hashanah. The Pasuk says today [Rosh Hashanah] you stand before Hashem [Attribute of Mercy] and **אלקיכם**] Attribute of Strict Justice].

When a person stands in front of Hashem for judgment under His Midat HaRachamim then he is able to stand the judgment since the Mida of mercy will likely grant the person a favourable judgment. However, to stand before Hashem for judgment under His Mida of Din is not as simple.

As we know when Hashem first created the world He created it with strict justice [**אלקים**], and He ended up destroying the world and starting over again. It was only when the world was created with the Mida of Rachamim that the world continued to exist.

Similarly when a person stands before Hashem under His Mida of Din it is less likely that he will come out with a favourable verdict. Here however Moshe told the People that they all stand before Hashem under both Attributes, Mercy and Strict Justice.

Our Mefarshim tell us that these were words of encouragement, so how is it that they are still standing? Shouldn't they be terrified by the attribute of **אלקים** ?

One answer is that when we mix the attribute of Din with Mercy we get a merciful Judgement. Like we always say Coffee by itself is bitter but once you add just a little bit of Sugar the coffee becomes sweet. But what sparks the combination of the two Midot?

That the Pasuk tells us is Unity. The Pasuk says that YOU [**אתם**] are standing before Hashem your G-d. Once there is unity between the Jewish people then the Mida of Rachamim is activated and turns Din into Mercy.

Before Rosh Hashanah this is a very vital lesson, we must be united by forgiving each other. Yes, sometimes it is hard, but we must try and remember that Hashem runs the world and life is His Will, so if it seems anyone has wronged us it was Hashem's Will.

The Megalei Amukot gives yet another interpretation of how to get the favourable judgment that we seek. He says don't read the word **אתם** rather read it **אמת** [Truth]. We stand before Hashem only when we are there with truth and wholeheartedly. When we do His Mitzvoth and Spread His Torah for the truth and not for our personal gain. My father AH used to say why is Hashem's stamp **אמת**?

Because the Torah is made up of the letters of the Alef-Bet. **א** is the first letter, **מ** is the middle letter and **ת** is the last letter, so when one is Truthful he is keeping the entire Torah.

For all these reasons this Parasha comes out the week immediately preceding Rosh Hashanah. To teach us the recipe for a favourable judgment before Yom HaDin. (**R. Yosef Akilov**)

Yeshivas Beis Dovid Newsletter

וְשַׁבְתָּ עַד־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְקֹלוֹ "And you will return to Hashem your G-d and listen to His voice…"

Every Yid wants to do teshuvah and return to Hashem. We all make resolutions but end up slipping back into our old ways.

The Chofetz Chaim brings a mashal to explain where we are going wrong: A wine merchant once travelled to a wine wholesaler to purchase a large amount of wine. The merchant placed a large order, asking to pay on credit. He was refused. "Do you think I've forgotten how much money you owe me from previous orders?" the wholesaler asked.

The wine merchant hurried to explain himself. "Something always came up to prevent me from paying you in the past, but don't worry. This time I'll surely pay you." However, all his excuses and pleading were in vain since the seller refused to give him even a ruble's worth of wine on credit.

At some point during their conversation, another wine merchant walked into the store. He quickly grasped the cause of disagreement and said to the merchant, "Don't purchase such a huge amount of wine and owe so much money. Instead, buy a small amount that you can afford."

The merchant was persuaded. He bought a small quantity of wine and paid for it immediately. He sold the wine quickly and returned to buy a little more. He did the same thing several times until he could afford to pay off his debts.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that we come before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah begging for His forgiveness and promising that we will never sin again. Hashem knows, though, that we will not be able to keep our promise. The best method to use is that of the wine merchant. We should start with something small, something we can do. For example, we can try to be more careful with our speech

during certain hours of the day. Slowly, we can increase the time and then move to other areas to improve. In this way, we can do real teshuvah that will be concrete and long lasting. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. **(Rabbi Yoeli Rottenstein)**

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Car Accidents

In a letter dated Monday, Parshas Vayeishev in the year 1988, **R' Shmuel Wosner** was asked for his opinion as to why there were an increase in car accidents during that period.

One reason, he writes, is because of the sins that are committed on the road, as is known. [R' Sternbuch (Teshuvos V'hanhagos, 3:76) writes that included in **חיות רעות** (literally evil animals) that we say in Tefilas Ha'derech, are car drivers that drive like **חיות רעות**.]These cause spiritual evil forces to be created that are now present on the road and they snatch people in the guise of car accidents. At times, even innocent people fall into their clutches.

Another reason, he writes, is that people don't perform the chessed of giving a ride to those who are waiting for a hitch.[It has been said that giving a ride to people falls under the category of the great mitzva **הכנסת אורחים** , hospitality to guests.] Many times, this falls under the category of **לא חסר זה נהנה וזה** this one benefits (hitchhiker in this case) and this one doesn't lose (the driver).

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב ***"See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil "*** (30:15)

One should not perform good deeds in order to live; one should live in order to perform good deeds. ***(Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)***

חומש, תהילים, תניא- חת"ת



Aharon Danderowitz relates: "When I was five years old, my father was very unwell. The hospital specialist said that they feel that they need to operate as a matter of urgency. However, this operation will undoubtedly leave him reduced to 'a cabbage'. What do you want to do?

One of the people who went through the war with my father was Reb Yisrael Rodzinski who said that such a question ought to be put to a *gadol b'Yisrael*. He sent 23 letters to various gedoilim across the world. He only got one reply!



From the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who said that he has a kabala from his ancestors, that one that says **חת"ת** will see a yeshuah - **שזו סגולה לכמה וכמה ענינים.** So reb Yisrael said that he decided to call the Rebbe directly. He said to the Rebbe, "we have received your letter , but the man is too ill to say **חת"ת** ". So the Rebbe said, "let his family do it on his behalf." Reb Yisrael replied that unfortunately, he has lost all his family in the Holocaust – he has no-one.

"So let a friend do **חת"ת** for him."

Reb Yisrael was not a Lubavitcher chasid, but he started doing **חת"ת** for his friend.

After six weeks, there was a marked improvement in my father's health. After another six weeks, he was released from hospital! Boruch Hashem, he was fine!

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Chizuk – Inspiration

Rav Shlomo Zalman of Volozhin (1756-1788), was the younger brother of **Rav Chaim of Volozhin**. He knew Shas Bavli, Yerushalmi and the entire Mishna Torah of the Rambam by heart. Rav Shlomo Zalman was also an Ish Emes – a man of truth, who was scrupulous in every word of Chazal.



The corner of the G'ra in the Vilna cemetery

On the right–the grave of Rabbi Zalmele
On the left – the grave of rabbi Yitzchak – the father of Rabbi Zalmele and Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin
In the middle – the grave of the G'ra

Once, a Rav and Rav Shlomo Zalman had entered the home of a very poor man who was a friend of the Rav. The poor man offered the two of them to join him for a meal. Rav Shlomo Zalman who was aware of the poor financial circumstances of the host responded, "Unfortunately, my doctor warned me to be very careful of certain foods. I apologize, but I must listen to my doctor and cannot join you for a meal."

After they left the host's company, the Rav asked Rav Shlomo Zalman how he could have said such words, as he knew that no medical doctor had warned Rav Shlomo Zalman against eating any type of food.

Rav Shlomo Zalman responded. "**The Rambam** [who was a doctor] writes in Hilchos Teshuvah 4:4, that one who eats from a meal of a poor man who does not have enough to eat himself is guilty of a "shade of theft." This is because the poor man doesn't freely give the food to his guests, because he really needs the food for himself. [Since I suspected that this was the case here] the Rambam, my doctor, essentially had told me not to join the Rav for a meal."

The Halacha is, that one may not eat of food where the owner offering the food cannot afford it. Telling the owner this, however, is offensive and embarrassing. To avoid embarrassing someone – it is permitted to lie. At the same time, Rav Shlomo Zalman did not wish to lie if there was an alternative.

For this reason, he used the term "my doctor" to describe the Rambam – so that he would not have to lie even though lying was permitted in this case to avoid embarrassing the poor man.

This is an inspiring level of Emes toward which we should aspire.

"True service of Hashem means having complete trust in Him in all situations." ~ Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto.

The Impact of Women on History – Rabbi YY Jacobson

Somebody once asked me, "Why is it the Bible that all the decisions are made by men, and all the stories are about men, what about the women?"

So I said, "I don't know which Bible you're reading, but I will tell you about the Bible that I read, and you will notice that every big decision that affects history, is made by women – for good and not for good.

Who decided that Adam should eat from the tree of knowledge? – not him.



Who decided that Yaakov should get the blessings and not Esav? - Rivka not Yitzchok.

Who decided that Yishmael shouldn't stay in the home? – It was Sarah, not Avraham.

Who decided that Yaakov was going to marry Leah and not Rochel? – Lavan planned it, but if the two sisters weren't in cahoots with each other, it would never have happened. Rochel and Leah decided it.

Who decided that Yehudah should be with Tamar? – Tamar.

Who decided that Yosef gets thrown into prison and ultimately becomes the viceroy of Egypt? – The wife of Potiphar.

Who decided that Pharoah's decree in Egypt to kill all the Jewish babies should not be executed? – Shifra and Puah.

Who decided that Moshe Rabeinu should be retrieved from the river? – Basya."

So I told this person, "With all due respect, I don't know which Bible you are reading, but if you read my Bible, you will see that the small decisions are made by men, and the big decisions are made by women!"

Peninim on The Torah - The Rickshaw



Horav Shmuel Berenbaum, zl, related that when the Mirrer Yeshivah was in Shanghai (during World War II), they saw for the first time, men (who were poverty stricken) pulling a rickshaw that people used as transport.

The students were shocked to see human beings treated as animals of burden. In time they became accustomed to the unusual sight.

One of the premier *talmidim*, ***Horav Leib Malin, zl***, who eventually became *Rosh Yeshivah* in Mesivta Torah VoDaas, could not reconcile himself with such demeaning of humanity, so he refused to ride in a rickshaw.

ווו איז גאָט - Where is G-d



In 1972, Elliot Lasky was a student at State University of New York at Buffalo.

'I grew up frum, went to yeshiva and kept Shabbos. At the age of 18 - as many people back in the 60's, I started having questions and I ended up totally leaving Jewish observance.



Back in 1972, I was on a concert tour with the Rolling Stones, I was 24 years old at the time. It was not exactly a spiritual experience.

It was several months later, when a friend contacted me who was a Zen Buddhist and lay out the whole Buddhist way of life to me. It sounded very interesting. For some reason, spiritually, I awakened. I asked myself, "How can Judaism be right and the whole world wrong?" That was the question that kept percolating in my mind.

I had a close relationship with Rabbi Noson Gurary, the Chabad shliach in Buffalo, so I called him. I started sharing some of my questions with him. He said, "There is only one person that can help

you, and that is the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**. Go to 770 Eastern Parkway, meet my brother-in-law, Yossi Hendel and he will arrange a meeting."

It was a very bitter cold winters day in January of 1973. I am wearing snakeskin boots, tight jeans, and a leather jacket. I had very long hair. I am waiting outside, and I see an old limousine pull up, and a distinguished Rabbi came out of the car. I go over and approach the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

I stopped him right in front of the steps of 770. Yiddish is my first language, and I said, " **אַנטשולדיקט אָבער ביסטו דער ליובאַוויטשער רבי - *Excuse me, but are you the Lubavitcher Rebbe?"***

Our eyes lock. I never in my life saw eyes like the Rebbe's eyes before. He didn't say yes, I am the Rebbe; he didn't say no. He said, "**וואָס איז דײַן נאָמען, און פֿון וואַנען ביסטו** – What is your name, and where are you from?" I tell him, and I say, "**איך האב א שאלה** - I have a question." He said, " **פרעגן** – ask."

Our eyes are locked, I felt like we were transported to another time, to another place and it's like there is nothing around us, it's just the two of us. It was an incredibly spiritual experience for me, really transcending the physical bounds.

I asked him, "**ווו איז גאָט** - Where is G-d?"

The Rebbe answered me, " **אומעטום** - everywhere."

I said, "**איך ווייס** - I know, **אָבער ווו** - but where?"

He said, " **אומעטום אין אַלץ** - in everything, in every place. **אין אַ בוים** – in a tree, **אין אַ שטיין** - in a stone."

I say to the Rebbe, "**איך ווייס, אבער וואו** – I know, but where?"

He then said something that really blew me away.

He said,"**אויב דאָס איז ווי איר פרעגן, גאָט קענען זיין געפֿונען אין דיין האַרץ** - If this is how you are asking , then Hashem can be found in your heart."

I found that it would be difficult to express myself in philosophical terms in Yiddish, so I asked him if I can switch to English, and he said, "Speak in English."

I asked, "When we say שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ אֶחָד ה' whether you are a Jew, a black man or an Indian, isn't there only one G-d for all of us?"

The Rebbe answered, "The essence of the black man is to be what he is as a black man. The essence of the Indian is to be what he is as an Indian. The essence of a Yid is to be tied to Hashem Yisborach through Torah and Mitzvos." And those were very powerful words for me.

He gave me two things to do. One to learn the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch in English, and the other to start putting on tefillin.



I went back to my friend's place. I didn't change my ways the next day. I didn't change two or three weeks later, but about three months down the line, I started putting on tefillin which I had not put on for several years.

From that day till today, I have never missed a day. And as they say **מצוה גוררת מצוה** - One mitzvah leads to another mitzvah. Boruch Hashem today, I have four beautiful children, all of them going on the path of Torah.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Most Miraculous Miracle

If a person wants to see a miracle nowadays, all he has to do is look at a Jew. A Jew living today is the greatest miracle a person will ever see. As the Aruch Hashulchan writes **אין לך אות ומופת גדול מזה** , there is no wonder greater than this.



More than 3300 years ago, our ancestors were in Mitzrayim where 80% of our nation perished. Yet Hashem preserved our ancestors so that you can be here today. At the time of the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash, the death toll was enormous, but Hashem wanted you to be here today. Hashem made certain that we made it through the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. The number of people that died during the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash was similarly staggering. Josephus writes that the number of people that died was 1.1 million. Then the Romans hunted down each Jew that they could find. But Hashem wanted you and so He saved your ancestors.

Thousands of Jews were massacred during the crusades, but Hashem wanted you. in the year 1391, 200,000 Jews were forcibly converted in Spain, but Hashem invested in you. 300,000 Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and tens of thousands were killed. Hashem saved your ancestors from the Chmielnicki pogroms. We are a fraction of a fraction that has survived the selection of the Jewish people.

Hashem has been looking out for you for 3300 years. Your ancestor was rescued from the Holocaust so that you can be alive today. For a Jew to be here is not statistically unlikely or not highly improbable. It is IMPOSSIBLE! The greatest miracle!

Here are the astounding words of **R' Yaakov Emden**.[Introduction to his Siddur Beis Yaakov. This was written close to 300 years ago. What would he say today?] "How can the heretic in G-d's providence not be ashamed? Simply analyse our situation in this world. We are an exiled people, and despite all that has happened to us over thousands of years we are still here. I swear that when I marvel at this wonder, it is much greater to me than all the miracles that Hashem performed for our ancestors in Mitzrayim, the *midbar* and in Eretz Yisrael."

So the greatest miracle in the history of the world Hashem performed for you. And this is because He wants you, your tefillos, your Torah and mitzvos. - Throughout the history of the universe, there is nothing that Hashem has invested Himself in more than in the existence of each Jew!



Tenuous But Tremendous

In Shemoneh Esrei we say **כי אתה שומע תפלת כל פה** , ***You hear the prayer of every mouth***.

R' Uri of Strelisk is bothered why the formula is **כל פה** and not **כל תפלה** , that Hashem listens to every tefilla?

The words **כל פה** refer to a tefilla articulated without heart, by rote. It was just uttered with the mouth. Even such a tefilla Hashem listens to.

The Magid of Trisk in his Sefer Magen Avraham writes in the name of the Baal Shem Tov: Even if one doesn't know any


כתב ידו וחתימתו של
רבי אברהם מטריסק


רבי אברהם טברסקי מטריסק

kavanah and what the words of davening mean but just davens to Hashem because he is commanded, **תפלתו בוקעת ועולה עד לרקיע** — his tefilla still ascends and breaks through to the sky. This is because these holy words have such kedusha when it is said *l'shem shamayim*.

If you woke up today, you've already experienced Hashem's chesed: a beating heart, functioning lungs, seeing eyes, and the ability to walk, talk, and breathe it's endless goodness from Hashem! ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

Etz Hachaim – R' CT Blau



Rav Sholom Shvadron Related that when he got engaged, his future father-in-law, **R' Chaim Leib Aurbach, (father of R' Shlomo Zalman)**, told him that he was **זוכה** to a special Kallah. When he asked why she was more special than any other Kallah, R' Chaim Leib explained that this Kallah was born during a hunger in Yerushalayim. She was always hungry, so he and his wife would take turns trying to make her happy, as they did not have enough food to feed her properly.

R' Chaim Leib took the night shift, and the only way he could keep her calm was by rocking her cradle and learning out loud. R' Chaim Leib stated, "Your Kallah heard me learn the entire **ש"ס** during that time."

Unfortunately, people want their children out of their hair, so they stuff their heads with all kinds of "entertainment" which will influence their pure soul for future generations.

Everyone knows that **ר' יהושע** 's mother brought his cradle to the **בית מדרש** and that alone at that young age was able to affect him. All the more so, we have to think multiple times what influences we are making on our children lives as they develop. It is our children and our responsibility to give them a positive pure upbringing.

When life gets difficult... Remember all the mountains Hashem has already helped you climb. The same Hashem who helped you then will help you now. ~ Chofetz Chaim.

The Esteemed Guest



Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer was once sitting in his home, discussing Torah thoughts with a group of disciples. Suddenly, one of his family members informed him that **R' Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav**, was about to arrive.

R' Meltzer immediately stood up and went to change from his week-day clothing that he had been wearing to his Shabbos finery. He put on his special Shabbos hat, and went out to greet his esteemed guest.

When he got to the door, however, it became clear that an error had been made. The visitor was not the great Brisker Rav but an ordinary Jew who looked like him.

R' Meltzer welcomed this Jew into his home with much honour. He then sat him at the head of the table, personally served him refreshments, and showed him great respect.

The students watched their rebbi with astonishment. When the visitor had left, they took the opportunity to ask R' Meltzer about his behavior.

"Why did the Rav display such great respect toward an ordi-nary guest?" they asked.

"My students," answered R' Meltzer, "you must know that we are required to shower each and every Jew with an abundance of honour. Every Jew is a child of The One and Only King and tnust therefore be treated like royalty! However, it is not always feasible to do so. But since I had already prepared rnyself to honour the person whom

I thought was the Brisker Rav, I was able to give this Jew the honour he rightfully deserved."

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



Rav Hillel Zaks related an astonishing thing that he learned from his grandfather, the **Chofetz Chaim**.

In his old age, the Chofetz Chaim said that he could not get around as much as he used to. The Chofetz Chaim declared with certainty, "If I were able to," said the Tzadik, "I would go from house to house at this time of year during Elul quoting only the Chazal in Masechta Shabbos (151b), — **כָּל הַמְרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת מְרַחֲמִין עָלָיו מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם**, ***"Whoever has compassion for other people, Shamayim will have compassion on him as well!"***

The Chofetz Chaim taught that doing Chesed, kindness to other people, was the best way to get Brachah for a good new year!"

From Migdal Ohr – Nitzavim

Even if you haven't reached the point where you are consistently defeating the Yetzer Hara and avoiding sin, but you are of the mindset that you want to get there, then Hashem can treat even more egregious sins as if they were errors.

When you decide to repent out of love of Hashem, those sins can even become mitzvos as they were the steppingstones that led you back to Him. Hashem is merciful because he doesn't require perfection, but instead just the desire and will to perfect ourselves.

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ

"Rather, the matter is very near to you, for you to carry out with your mouth and with your heart" (30:14)



The Tchebiner Gaon, R' Dov Berish Wiedenfeld, was famous for his extraordinary diligence in Torah study. Day and night he sat and toiled in Torah, not letting his thoughts drift for even one moment.

One morning, a student of R' Wiedenfeld entered his room in order to discuss a certain matter with him. Much to the student's surprise, the Tchebiner Rav seemed not to notice that he was there.

"I beg the Rav's forgiveness," said the student, "but I have come to discuss a specific issue with him,"

"What can be so pressing about your predicament that you have rushed here at midnight to discuss it with me?" asked the Tchebiner Rav.

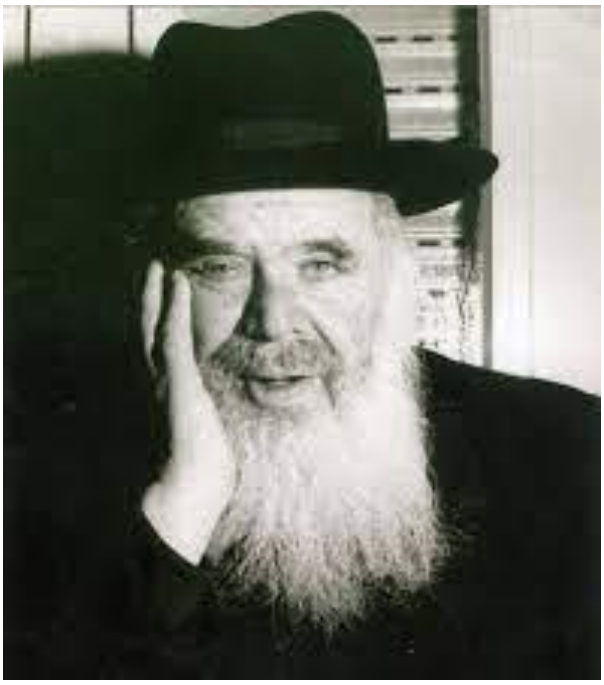
"Rebbe," said the student, "midnight has long passed; it is already morning."

Being so engrossed in his Torah learning, the Tchebiner Rav had not even realized that night had passed and day had begun!

Those who leave everything in Hashem's hand, will eventually see Hashem's hand in everything.

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ "Rather, the matter is very near to you, for you to carry out with your mouth and with your heart" (30:14)



When **R' Chaim Shmulevitz** was a young man, he was learning with another one of the outstanding students of the Mir Yeshivah. At one point in their learning, they had formulated seven different approaches to understanding a certain Talmudic topic. The hour, however, had gotten late, so they decided to stop for the night and return to their rooms.

The next morning, when they sat down to learn, R' Shmulevitz quickly summarized the seven different approaches they had worked on the night before.

"How are you able to remember what we learned last night?" asked the student to R' Shmulevitz. "I can't seem to remember anything!"

"What did you do after we concluded learning?" asked R' Shmulevitz.

"I went to sleep," responded the student.

"I did not," answered R' Shmulevitz. "Rather, when I returned to my room, I lay down in my bed and put my pillow over my head so I wouldn't disturb my roommates. Then, for the next few hours, reviewed- out loud - each one of the approaches that we learned together.

Is it so amazing, then, that I can remember them?"

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages



Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l, stated that the Mashgiach, **Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l**, once said, "We cannot even understand the greatness of our great-grandmothers."

Rav Miller commented, "Not our great-grandfathers. Rav Yeruchem said, 'our great-grandmothers!' They had such Yiras Shamayim that even Rav Yeruchem himself couldn't fathom it!"

Short Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin



An elderly grandfather, **Rav Klohr, ZT"L**, gathered his many offspring around him and spun a tale that was years in the making. "I am 98 years old, he began, and I'd like to tell you how I came to be blessed with longevity.

I was a teenager learning in one of the yeshivos in Vilna when it was announced that the **Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L**, would be coming to visit Vilna. My friends were ecstatic, counting down the days until we would see the great Tzaddik and get his blessing. Unannounced, my

father came to Vilna to visit me. I asked him if he had also come to see the Chofetz Chaim. He answered no. Rather, he came to tell me not to go to this event."

"My father said that he was worried about my safety in such a large crowd, with everyone pushing to get a better view. I was extremely disappointed, but I listened to my father. All my friends went and received a blessing from the Chofetz Chaim for long life!

Indeed, most of the Jews at that event lost their lives alongside the millions of Jews of Europe at the hands of the Nazis, may their names be erased. Yet, each of my friends survived the War, and each one lived into their 90's. However, I am 98 and the only one left alive. Although I didn't receive the blessing of the Tzaddik, I was blessed by Hashem Himself - for the Torah states (Shemos 20:12), 'honour your father and mother so that you may live a long life'!"

Draft Notice

Horav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman זצ"ל grew up in the city of Brisk. One day he received a letter that he was to be drafted into the army. Some people tried to get him an exemption but they did not succeed, and he had to run away to Switzerland to avoid the draft.

Many years later, Rav Shteinman said that it was very good he had to run away, because if he would have been excused from the army, he would have stayed in the city of Brisk and been killed by the Natzis **יִמַּח שְׁמָם** in WWII.

Tough times never last but tough people do

Chizuk in Our Lives

It was a sunny day in **ירושלים**. An Egged bus pulled up to a bus stop and a throng of people began boarding. One of the passengers tripped as he was getting on to the bus, hit hishead on the side of the door, and fell down onto the concrete, losing consciousness.



A *Hatzala* member happened to be there and quickly ripped the person's shirt open to perform resuscitation only to see…24 grams of C4 dynamite strapped onto the man's chest!

The man was an Arab terrorist who had boarded the bus with the intention to blow it up and kill dozens of *Yidden*. The *Hatzala* member and bus driver realised that the terrorist was starting to regain consciousness, so they evacuated the area, pinned the man down until the bomb squad arrived and deactivated the bomb.

That evening, the secular media were rife with praise for the bus driver and *Hatzala* member about how they handled the situation. The one thing they forgot to mention was how this healthy, strong young man just 'happened' to trip on the first step as he boarded the bus, and knocked himself unconscious for just enough time for the *Hatzala* member to notice the bomb and to immobilize the terrorist.

הנה לא ינום ולא יישן שומר ישראל.

"Recognize that everything is in Hashem's hands, and you will have nothing to fear." ~ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hersch.

Chazu Bonai - לדוד ה' אורי

אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת ה' אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ

At first glance it seems like this **פסוק** is repeating itself. **דוד המלך** says, 'there is one thing that I ask from **הקב"ה** and this is what I request.' Why not just ask straight out and say **? אחת שאלתי מאת ה' שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי**

Also, why is **שאלתי** in the present tense whist **אבקש** is in the future?

The **קדושת לוי זי"ע** quotes **רבי יחיאל מיכל מזלוטשוב זי"ע** (a **תלמיד** of the **בעל שם טוב**) as saying that the words **שאלה** and **בקשה** are not repetitive at all.

דוד המלך 's **שאלה** , his request, was to be a **מבקש** ! He was asking **הקב"ה** to help him be a person who is constantly seeking, striving and growing in his **עבודת ה'**!

This explains why the **שאלה** was in the past but the **בקשה** is in the future. Once one has achieved a higher level of **תורה ויראת שמים** there are still higher levels to get to. **דוד המלך** is telling us that the secret to success in **עבודת ה'** is to be a constant **מבקש** , always striving to rise to the next **...מדרגה.**

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - The Last Circumcised King

King Charles III and I don't have a lot in common. And even though as a child, I remember strongly identifying with him, I realized pretty soon that the silver spoon in his mouth was considerably more silvery than mine. We do have one similarity, though. We're both circumcised. King Charles and before him, the sons of George V – Edward VIII, the Duke of Windsor; George VI; Henry, Duke of Gloucester; George, Duke of Kent; and Prince John were all circumcised.

Now, legend has it that Queen Victoria believed that she was descended from King David and thus commanded her family to be

circumcised. Now, whether this is true or not, in December 1948, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Snowman was invited to Buckingham Palace to circumcise Prince Charles. In fact, circumcision was widely performed on British middle and upper class male infants from the 1890s through the 1940s.

Things have changed a bit since then.

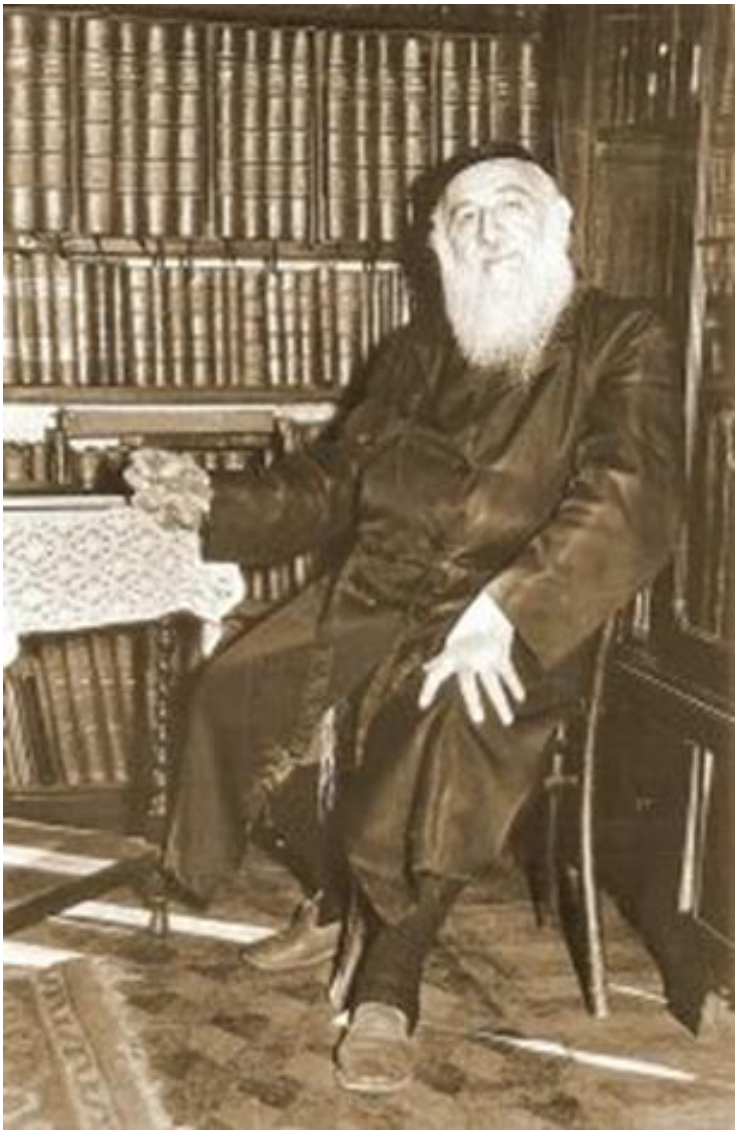
In 2010, activists against infant circumcision began an initiative to put a measure on San Francisco's November 2011 ballot that would ban all non-medically necessary circumcisions of minors. The group also published a rabidly anti-Semitic comic about a "superhero who battles circumcisions."

Hermann Rauschning in his book Gespräch mit Hitler, published in English as "Hitler Speaks," writes that Hitler said to him, "Conscience is a Jewish invention. Like circumcision, it mutilates man." It's interesting that Hitler linked conscience with circumcision. Conscience requires us to think about the consequences of our actions, to focus on the future and not the present. The body's interest is only the present. The place of the circumcision, brit milah, is the place from which our future flows.

The Hebrew name for the womb is rechem. You can rearrange the letters of rechem to read machar, which means tomorrow. The word in Hebrew for circumcision is Brit Mila. But it also means a covenant. Avraham Avinu made a brit, a covenant, with G-d. And in this covenant, Avraham dedicated everything he would ever be to his future, his progeny, and their progeny, throughout all the generations to G-d. And G-d, so to speak, dedicated His future, everything that He would ever be in this world, to come about through Avraham. Avraham Avinu and his children, the Jewish people.



The Bracha of the Shotzer Rebbe



Harav Shalom Moskowitz, the Shotzer Rebbe, *zy"a*

There is a Rav in London who told me the following story, 10 years ago. In 1950, when he was a young boy in the Yesodei Hatorah school, a levaya took place on Cazenove Rd in Stamford Hill of some great man, he cannot remember the person's name). It was winter and all the children of the school were brought to Cazenove Rd. to pay their respect to the nifter.

It was a very big levaya and in Europe the levayas take place in the street. There were hundreds of man and there was a sea of black, the coats, suits and hats etc. A car stopped and waited a bit thinking that the crowd will pass quickly.

There was one hesped after the other. The driver was impatient and wanted to ask the people to pass. The passenger was very compassionate after she had realized it was a funeral and said to her driver, "We must have respect for the deceased and the mourning family."

This passenger was none other than the Queen Mother who then was the Consort of King George VI, and the mother of the present Queen Elizabeth II. , who was in the official car (Rolls Royce) on the way to an official engagement.

The Queen Mother did not realize that Jewish funerals have quite a few hespedim and she was considerably delayed. **The Shotzer Rebbe Z'TL** approached The Queen, and made the bracha for the Queen. He then gave his own bracha and benched her that she should have a long and healthy life with all her faculties, to serve her people and kingdom, and thanked her for her compassion in not disrupting the funeral. The bracha materialized, as the Queen Mother lived to be over 101 and was in great health until she passed away in 2002.

There are always many people at the Shotzer Rebbe's Z'TL kever every single Friday morning davening, beseeching and crying and literally hundreds of candles are lit.

May the Shotzer Rebbe Z'TL be a meilitz yashor for all Klall Yisrael and may all our tefillot be answered le tova. Amen!

The Falcons



Once a king received two magnificent peregrine falcons as a gift from one of his vassal state. They were the most beautiful birds he has ever seen. Though the Falcons were still quite young at the time, they were beautiful specimens groomed for keeping in his court specifically. The king called the head falconer and handed the two beautiful birds to be trained.

The falconer trained the birds for months. But one day the falconer informed the king that one of the falcons was flying and soaring high

in the sky while the other has not moved from its branch since the day it had arrived.

"I've never come across a bird as stubborn as this before," the trainer complained to the king. He went on to describe how the creature ignored, refused and stubbornly lashed out at his every attempt. "May be there is something wrong with this bird. It just won't fly," said the trainer. The falconer was one of the best in the land, his talents widely lauded by all who knew him. So, the king decided to give the trainer some more time to make the bird fly.

Months passed but the falcon never moved from the branch. The kings summoned all healers, sorcerers and other trainers from all the land to make the falcon fly. But none of them succeeded and the bird did not move from its perch.

One day a farmer was passing by the palace and heard about the stubborn falcon who wouldn't fly. He thought he would give a try to make the bird fly.

Having tried everything else, the king was desperate to make the bird fly, so he allowed the farmer attempt to make the bird fly.

The next morning while the king was thrilled to see the two magnificent birds soaring high in the sky from his balcony.

The king did not witness the feat himself, so he had the farmer brought before him to answer to his questions.

"I would like to know your secret," the King said. "Tell me, how did you, achieve what the most highly trained, intuitive and wise men could not? How did you make the falcon fly?" The farmer peered up from beneath his brow. "It was actually quite simple, your highness. I just cut the branch on which the bird was perched."

We all are made to fly. But at times we sit on to our branches, clinging to the things familiar to us and never attempting to change. The possibilities in the world are endless, but most of it remains undiscovered because we never attempt to go beyond our comfort

zone. We conform to the familiar, the comfortable, and the mundane. We need to go outside of our comfort zone, destroy the branch of fear we cling to and free ourselves to the glory of flight!

Under The Mailbox – Rabbi Yoel Gold



Recently, a friend of mine moved into a old duplex building here in LA. He found that the old doorbell wasn't working. In order to fix it, he had to go around the house and crawl through the floorspace, find the wiring, and change it.

As he was crawling under the house, and rummaging around, he suddenly notices papers and envelopes, keys and coins. He wonders to himself, "How did all this get here?"



It turns out, that the mail compartment had a crack in it, and every so often, some mail would fall through the gap and end up in the crawl space in the cellar. For the past hundred years, these items collected here in the dust and rubble.

He took them outside, sat on his front doorstep, and went through each piece. He was surprised to find a postcard dated 1938 from someone in Italy, congratulating the tenant for moving into his new domicile. There was a letter with a receipt inside to someone who had donated a letter for a new sefer Torah.

As he is going through each item, an old lady just so happened to walk past. She walks over and introduces herself as someone who lived in that duplex over 25 years ago. She said, "I'm wondering if there may be some mail for me?

They start going through the mail, and suddenly, she sees an envelope with her name on it! She says, "Oh my goodness, this is for me!"



She takes the letter, and she opens the envelope. Inside were four crisp $100 bills!

It was dated 1995. The letter read, 'I know that it is right before the holidays, and that your financial situation is tough, I thought that maybe this extra money would come in handy.'

She got so emotional and started crying. She looked at my friend and said, "Wouldn't you believe it, YomTov is coming up again, and I could really use this extra money right now."

As she walked away, my friend couldn't believe it. What were the chances of him crawling through the crawl space, finding her mail with her money just as she's walking past, so that he can give it to her.

When it comes to chesssed, the Torah mentions three very powerful words - אֶת הֶעָנִי עִמָּךְ (Shemos 22:24) – ***'That which belongs to the Ani, is by you!'***

Extra money that we find, doesn't belong to us. It belongs to the ani. The only reason that Hashem put it into our possession, is so that

when the ani walks by, we can have the opportunity and mitzvah of giving it to them.

The next time that such an opportunity comes knocking at your door, dig deep, because - **אֶת הֶעָנִי עִמָּךְ** - what belongs to the needy, is with you!

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Surprising Uprising



הגאון רבי מנחם זעמבא זצ"ל הי"ד
מיט הגרי"ז מבריסק זצ"ל

R' Menachem Ziemba HYD repeatedly and emphatically gave sanction to the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and he considered it to be an act of Kiddush Hashem. it is recorded that R' Menachem Ziemba told the people in the ghetto "…and for this reason it appears to me that according to halacha it would be a mitzva to revolt for the strategic good of the overall war effort …There would be a Kiddush Hashem in doing so and this would be considered a *milchemes mitzva*.

R' Menachem Ziemba was purported to have advised the inhabitants of the ghetto "I speak to you from the very depths of my conscience and warn you that there is only one way out for us. To revolt! To resist! Every able-bodied man must revolt and resist!

R' Shlomo Leiner of Radzin instructed his chassidim to rebel and to join forces with the partisans in the forest. He declared a *taanis*

in Lublin and organized a rebellion. When the Nazis learned of these plans, they presented an ultimatum: either the rebbe surrenders to us or the entire town would be wiped out.

Without informing the Rebbe of this ultimatum, his gabbai dressed as the Rebbe and presented himself to the Nazis where he was immediately killed. The Nazis subsequently learned the truth and then the Rebbe had no choice but to surrender to the Nazis. He gave up his life *Al Kidush Hashem* after being beaten and tortured. He remained defiant until the end and with his last breath he cried out, "Revolt! Never surrender to evil! Shema Yisrael!"



There was a Rav in the Warsaw Ghetto who actively participated in the uprising: **Rav Zemelman, the Rav of Peshaitz**. He snuck out of the ghetto into the Aryan part of the city. Posing as a non-Jew he obtained weapons that he smuggled into the ghetto. He urged the youth to utilize the weapons and revolt against the Nazis.

R' Tzvi Hersh Meisels, author of Shu"t Mikdashei Hashem, also supported the uprising.

When the members of the Mir Yeshiva fled Europe due to the Holocaust, winding up in Shanghai, China, they were treated well by the local Chinese. Yet, there was a group of Chinese people that hated these Jews and plotted against them. They secretly arranged to kill these Jews of the Mir.

However, a Chinese man, who had an affinity for these Jews, found out about this plot, and informed the authorities, resulting in a

foiled plot. This Chinese man was discovered by the group that planned the attack and had him killed.

This incident troubled the boys in the Mir Yeshiva immensely because this Chinese man saved many Jews from a horrific death, not for his honour or money but because it was the right thing to do. Why did Hashem punish him like this? They took their question to **R' Chatzkel Levenstein**. When they approached the door to his office, they heard him crying, ***"Hashem, this non-Jew was a wonderful man, but he was not Jewish. This was the only time he helped boys in yeshiva, and yet You gave him a gift—to die Al Kiddush Hashem. I, Chatzkel, have served You faithfully my entire life and have helped boys many times. Why didn't You give me this present to be Mekadesh Shem Shamayim like this Chinese person?"***

It is known that the **Chofetz Chaim** davened often that he should merit to die *Al Kiddush Hashem*.

The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

Benefitting The Public Helps on The Day of Judgement

The Alter of Kelm zt"l writes: If a person wants to have a good judgement on Rosh Hashanah, he should do things to benefit the public. If the public needs him because he does mitzvos and good deeds that help others – either by helping them with their ruchnius or with their gashmius – he will receive a good judgement because he is not living only for himself.

With this in mind, the Mashgiach **Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l** explains the pasuk in this week's Parshah: **אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם** "***You are all standing today***."

The Zohar Hakadosh says that the word "today" is reference to Rosh Hashanah. Thus, the pasuk is saying: When are you standing in

a good position to receive a good judgement on Rosh Hashanah? When you are "כֻּלְּכֶם", all of the people. If you are needed by all of the people because you do things to benefit them, you will stand strong on Rosh Hashanah.

The Blessing that Cured the Queen by Lazer Brody



Here is an amazing true story that few people are aware of. It's also a secret that even fewer people knew. And it's the unforgettable account of when the **Shotzer Rebbe of London** met face-to-face with King George VI. This was the momentous meeting that saved the life of the future Queen Elizabeth.

Epilepsy and the Royal Family

Epilepsy was in the genes of the British royal family. Queen Elizabeth's uncle Prince John, the youngest son of King George V, died at age 13 from a severe seizure. That was in 1918.

Let's fast-forward to 1939. Now, King George VI was deathly afraid that his 13-year-old daughter Elizabeth would meet the same fate as his brother Prince John.

The Kindertransport

That same year, the Jewish Agency was organizing the famous ***Kindertransport*** (German for "children's transport"). This was the rescue effort of children from Nazi-controlled territory. It took place during the nine months prior to the outbreak of the World War II in September of 1939. The United Kingdom took in nearly 10,000 predominantly Jewish children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. This initiative encountered strong resistance from certain British circles.

The Chief Rabbi of England at the time was **Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz**. He decided to intercede on behalf of the Kindertransport, so he visited King George VI together with the holy tzaddik, **The Shotzer Rebbe of London, Grand Rabbi Shalom Moscowitz, osb"m**.

The Rebbe's Blessing

King George VI never saw such an illuminated countenance as that of the Shotzer Rebbe. He asked for a blessing for his daughter, who was 13 at the time, and suffering from epileptic seizures. "Please, might the Rebbe pray that my daughter will live."

The Rebbe answered unequivocally, "If Your Majesty will assure that the Kindertransport is approved, and thereby save Jewish children, then undoubtedly measure for measure, the princess will not only live, but her ailment will disappear altogether."

The King was deeply moved. The Kindertransport began immediately and the princess – later to be Queen Elizabeth II who passed away at the ripe old age of 96 on September 8, 2022 – was miraculously cured immediately.

Always With You By R' Binyomin Pruzansky



We are in the month of Ellul. Sometimes a person thinks he's lost, he's in the forest. He is all alone, what should he do?

He calls out, "Tatty, Tatty, I need your help!"

When we make that call, no matter where we are, no matter where we are standing, no matter how far we have fallen, we have the ability to find "**אבינו שבשמים**". We can always find Hashem. But we have to look for Him.

Hashem is close to us during Ellul – **אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי**. But we have to look for Hashem. We must seek Him, Where is He?

He is right there. He is in our heart.

If we keep looking for Hashem, we will be able to find Him no matter what! There is no need to look far, Hashem is always with you!

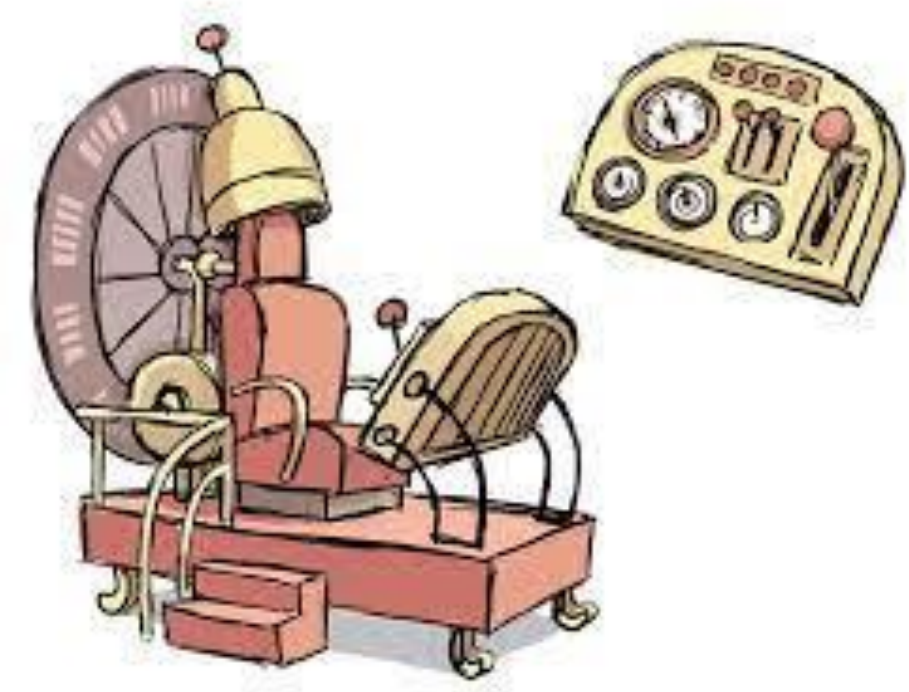
Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Step Into Hashem's Time Machine!

Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l discusses the greatness of every human. Hashem's first act of Creation, creating the heavens and the earth, was unequalled in history. Hashem had created something from nothing! Then, Hashem created the rest of the magnificent world, including trillions of star worlds. Hashem did not make any special announcements before any of those creations. Yet, before creating

man, Hashem made an announcement, "We are going to make man." Mankind is the most important creation.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l says that Man is not only greater than any object in creation. Man is more important than the entire creation, put together! Because of that, every action of man, even a small one, is very significant.



If the king of a huge empire would sign a decree, it would affect millions of his subjects. His small act of signing a paper could determine life or death for millions, because he, as the one signing that paper, was such a great and powerful person. (Toras Avigdor on Parshas Ki Seitzei)

Because man is so great, every act of his is so significant. Any deviation from what Hashem wants, any sin, is magnified greatly and has an impact on the entire world! We must be so careful to try to avoid even the "smallest" sin.

If we could appreciate our greatness and the far-reaching significance of each sin, we could easily fall into a state of depression. We sinned! How can we extricate ourselves? How can we regain Hashem's great love for us?

In fact, **Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l** says (Kochvei Ohr, perek 3) that historically, our prophets went to great pains to exhort us to do teshuva. They worked hard to try to convince the Jewish People who did not believe that their teshuva would be accepted. Why not?

Because they understood the enormity of sin and felt that teshuva was not possible. They understood what it meant to lift a hand against Hashem.

Truthfully, we should be "stuck", without any hope. We did something terrible. It seems as if we can't undo it. We can't go back into time, into a time machine, and act differently. But we can! Hashem gave us a time machine! As in computers, Hashem gave us a "system restore feature" which resets our system to the state it was in, on a previous date. Hashem, in His great kindness, gave us the gift of teshuva. By admitting our sin, feeling regret, and accepting upon ourselves not to repeat the sin, we can achieve forgiveness for our actions.

Besides that, we can achieve even more than forgiveness! Hashem can push the reset button and make it as if our sin never even happened!

Even more, if the teshuva for our sin is totally sincere and brings us closer to Hashem, then our forgiven sin can potentially be considered a mitzvah. We should never feel that we have sunk too low to do teshuva. The Torah (Devarim 30:11-12) says, "This is not in the heavens".

The Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin zt"l (in sefer Emek Davar) quotes the **Ramban and Sforno** that this refers to the mitzvah of doing teshuva resulting from his great love for Hashem. Doing teshuva out of love for Hashem is a higher level of teshuva, but it is doable. No matter how distant we feel, no matter how much we feel that we have drifted, the rift is not irreparable. If we make a sincere effort to repent properly, we can always return to Hashem, just as a wayward son who is remorseful can always return to his father. His father is always close and will accept him with open arms. One may feel that he is unworthy of Hashem's closeness because of his sins. He may fear that Hashem has abandoned him. That may lead him to sin further.

However, **Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l** says, focusing on our special relationship with Hashem and Hashem's constant and continuing kindness to us will help us realize and feel that teshuva is possible. Man is greater than the universe! Every sin that he does, impacts the entire world! Hashem, in His infinite kindness, gave us the opportunity to correct our wrongs. If one does teshuva properly, Hashem will consider it as if his sin was never done.

As we approach Rosh Hashana, let's try to improve.

Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l says that we should start by making improvements in matters that are easy for us. We can start by improving one action, at a time. That will put us into the category of people who are in the midst of doing teshuva.



Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם "See, I have given before you today life and goodness, death and evil… **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים** - and you shall choose life" (30:15,19).

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, was bothered that the word 'today' seems out of place. He explains that one must take daily stock of their situation and constantly reassess to ensure that today they are doing what is right. Yesterday's right may be today's wrong and vice versa.

This also gives us the ability to take advantage of each day. If yesterday may not have been so good, today I can choose to make the right decisions and grow.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l, recalled being hospitalized with a severe infection when the door to his hospital room opened, and a very distinguished looking visitor entered. It was **Rav Aharon Leib Steinman, zt"l**, and Rav Yaakov immediately sat up straight and started to make sure he was presentable for the Gadol HaDor.

"Oy, Reb Yankel," said Rav Aharon Leib, "I can't even tell you how wealthy you are!" Rav Yankel wasn't sure what Rav Aharon Leib meant. "Am I wealthy?"

Rav Aharon Leib explained that he'd just been on the eighth floor of the same hospital to visit a patient. It was a well-known and respected Baal Tzedakah and supporter of Torah, who was struggling with a very serious illness. "And he told me, 'Rebbe, I would give away half of what I own if I could only get out of this bed! What is all my money worth if I can't even move?'

But you, Reb Yankel, you can get out of bed and walk around. Did you ever stop and contemplate how much that is worth?

Now we know. It's worth at least half of that man's fortune, but I don't know how much his fortune is, so that's what I meant when I said that I can't even tell you how wealthy you are!"

The Weekly Haftorah - R' Tzvi Hirsch Hoffman

שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ בַּה' תָּגֵל נַפְשִׁי בֵּאלקַי כִּי הִלְבִּישַׁנִי בִּגְדֵי־יֶשַׁע I will rejoice with Hashem; my soul shall exult with my G-d, for He has attired me with garments of salvation… (Yeshayahu 61:10)



While the mention of *"garments of salvation"* is clearly a metaphor to Hakadosh Boruch Hu redeeming Klal Yisroel and bringing us home to Eretz Yisroel, nevertheless, everything written in Tanach has a deeper meaning and this is no exception.

The Imrei Emes, R' Avraham Mordechai Alter zt"l expounds on this posuk and explains that just as a person who has become dirty

changes his clothing and becomes clean, so too, those who sincerely do teshuva and digress from their sinful ways, will merit to shed their metaphorically "soiled clothing" from sin and don "clean clothing" - in other words, Hashem will completely forgive them and absolve them of their sins, to avoid serious repercussions.

The lead-up to the Yemei Hadin is a special time when Klal Yisroel gets a chance to refocus our priorities and reflect on our past sins. We can begin shedding our "soiled clothing" from the previous year. It is only with a "full throttle" repentance that we hope to merit wearing the "clean clothes" that Yeshaya HaNavi so aptly references.

The Siddur Speaks



An overwhelmed Rosh Yeshivah once came to speak with **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach**. He said that he was done, and he couldn't continue on any further. He simply couldn't raise money for another payroll. It was too much pressure to raise the necessary funds month after month, and he wanted to close the Yeshivah.

Rav Shlomo Zalman asked the Rosh Yeshivah for how long he had been a Rosh Yeshivah. "Twenty-five years," was the reply. "And did you ever have hard times, worse even than right now?" Rav Shlomo Zalman asked.

The Rosh Yeshivah conceded that he had faced other difficult periods previously.

"And did the Ribono Shel Olam help you through those difficulties?" Rav Shlomo Zalman asked. "Yes.

In every situation He sent help in different ways."

Rav Shlomo Zalman said to him, "You were privileged to see Hashem's help and how He controls everything, and He makes sure that you have what you need, so why are you worried?

Let me tell you something," Rav Shlomo Zalman continued. "Everyone faces financial pressures. Every Rosh Yeshivah and Rosh Kollel, every business owner who needs to pay his staff, every parent trying to provide for his children, it's part of life. Instead of worry, you can develop real Bitachon, faith in Hashem, and then you will have the tools to enjoy what you're doing."

The Rosh Yeshivah asked, "But how? How can I develop such faith?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman offered practical advice. He said, "Buy a small notebook and keep it with you. Whenever you experience any sort of salvation, however small it might seem, write it in your book. It will fill up quickly, and then, when you Daven Shemoneh Esrei and reach the Tefilah of Modim Anachnu Lach, and we say 'thank you' to Hashem, open your notebook and glance through it.

If you follow my advice," Rav Shlomo Zalman concluded, "you will feel the kindness of Hashem at all times, and you will develop real faith. If you know what He has done in the past, then you can anticipate what He will continue to do for you in the future!"

"The word bitachon (ביטחון) is a derivative of betach (בטח), certainty. Not only do we believe that Hashem is able to provide, rescue, and grant success, but we are absolutely certain that Hashem will do just that, to the point that we are free of anxiety." ~ Sefer Chovos Halevavos.

Short Story - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Rav Shlomo Reichenberg recounted being sent to a Kibbutz after arriving in Israel in 1945 as a Holocaust survivor. He requested to be transferred to a Yeshiva, and was sent to check out two, Ponovezh in Bnei Brak and Kol Torah in Jerusalem.

He made his way to the one-story building that was Ponovezh Yeshiva at the time, and as he entered was stopped by a man who inquired whom he was looking for. He responded "**Rav Kahaneman**". "That is me".

A conversation ensued. He explained that he had arrived in Israel from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp and was now looking for a Yeshiva. He had been in Veitzin Yeshiva near Budapest before the war. Rav Kahaneman asked if he remembered anything that he had once learned. Rav Shlomo remembers that he tensed up, afraid that he'd need to pass a test in order to be accepted into the Yeshiva. He said, "Ask me a question".



He was asked which was the last mesechta he learned, and he answered "Chulin". He was then asked if he remembered an argument between Rashi and Tosafos in Chulin. He told him one. Rav Kahaneman kissed him on his forehead and walked him through the streets of

Bnei Brak until they reached a small building, the home of the **Chazon Ish!**

Rav Kahaneman became overcome with emotion, and told the Chazon Ish how a young concentration camp survivor could still say over a "Machlokes Rashi and Tosafos in Chulin"!

"Greatness of Torah" - "If a concentration camp can't make a Jew forget Torah, then Torah will never be forgotten"!

The Chazon Ish proceeded to spend two hours with the young man, listening to details of life in the camp. Upon finishing, the Chazon Ish said to young Shlomo, "This is your new home. The door is always open for you". (*Peninei Chein Al HaTorah*)

Learning from the Street Cleaner



The Toldos Avrohom Yitzchok Rebbe related that he once heard a story from **Rav Yehuda of Dzhikov** that made a profound impression on him.

The Dzhikover Rebbe once said at his tish that the Ateres Yeshuah of Dzhikov had to visit Vienna and noticed that there was a street cleaner cleaning the streets. The Ateres Yeshuah approached the street cleaner and asked him, "Why do you have to clean the street? In no time at all the street will become dirty again. Why should you waste your time every day?"

The cleaner replied, "Herr Rabbiner, if I would not constantly clean the streets, the garbage would pile up above our heads!"

The Toldos Avrohom Yitzchok Rebbe continued, "It is the same thing with teshuvah. People ask: What is the point of doing teshuvah if after the Yomim Noraim so many of us return to our old ways?

The answer is that if we would not clean up our aveiros, they would be so numerous that we would be over our heads in sin and they would engulf us. Boruch Hashem, if we do teshuva, even if we revert to some of those same sins, they are once again manageable and able to be cleansed" (Zichron Yehuda).

Begging Like a Pauper



During the First World War, when **Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz** fled Belz and was residing in the Hungarian city of Holoshitz, there was a prominent, successful businessman who would often spend Shabbos in the rebbe's presence.

Once, that man came for the Shabbos of selichos and planned on staying over until Sunday so that he could say the first selichos with the rebbe, but on motzei Shabbos, he received an urgent message that he must return home immediately. The Yid did not want to return home before taking leave of the rebbe and receiving his berachah. Thus, despite the fact that the rebbe's door was not generally open before selichos, he convinced the rebbe's attendants to let him in.

When he entered the rebbe's room, he was met with an unforgettable sight. The rebbe was holding a selichos in his hand, perusing the selichos with tears streaming from his eyes. He was talking to himself, saying, "We say, 'As paupers and beggars we knock at Your doors.' A beggar also has to know how to knock. If he bangs the door down, the owner will be very upset with him, exclaiming, 'Is that how you act when seeking a donation?'"

The person who knocks on the door and tells the baal habayis, "You are obligated to give me a donation," just makes the baal habayis

angry and uninterested in giving him anything. If, however, a person knocks softly and quietly explains, "You don't owe me anything, but perhaps you could give me something. I am so desperately in need of your help," the baal habayis will most likely look favourably upon his request.

Similarly, when we say selichos, we cannot come before Hashem with a demand. We must realize that Hashem has no obligation to us whatsoever. On the contrary, we are obligated to Him. We can only beg Him the way a pauper begs for a matnas chinom, a free gift."

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

הַנִּסְתָּרֹת לַה' אֱלֹקינוּ וְהַנִּגְלֹת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד־עוֹלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת 29:28



One afternoon in Jerusalem, **Rabbi Yakov Vann** was on his way to the synagogue for the afternoon prayers when somebody called out from a doorway asking him to complete a minyan in a house of mourning. He gladly agreed to pray with the mourners, but upon entering the apartment, he was surprised to observe that although it was full of seforim, the mourners themselves did not appear to be religiously observant.

After the prayer service had concluded, Rabbi Vann took out a Mishnah Berurah to examine it, and he was even more taken aback to see that its margins were full of astute insights and comments. He inquired about the owner of the seforim, and one of the mourners replied that they all belonged to the deceased, his father.

Rabbi Vann probed further, asking whether any of the other family members used the books. Sadly, the son responded that although his

father had been a very pious and learned Torah scholar, none of his children had followed in his ways. He explained that when his father came home each night, he would lock himself in his study and spend hours poring over his beloved tomes. However, because his Torah study only occurred behind closed doors and not in the presence of his family, his children never observed him learning and therefore did not absorb his passion for Torah and mitzvos.

As Rabbi Vann wistfully left the mourners, he realized that this encounter gave him a newfound appreciation of a novel Torah thought that he had recently heard.

In Parshas Nitzavim, Moshe told the Jewish people Hanistaros L'Hashem Elokeinu v'haniglos lanu ul'vaneinu ad olam. Literally, this means that hidden things belong to Hashem our G-d, while those that are revealed are forever for us and our children.

However, **Rav Aharon Rokeach**, the fourth Belzer Rebbe and uncle of the present Belzer Rebbe, suggested that the verse can be interpreted as follows: Hanistaros l'Hashem Elokeinu - if we hide our mitzvos by doing them privately, then only Hashem will know about our righteous ways.

On the other hand, v'haniglos lanu ul'vaneinu - if we take a different approach and reveal our good deeds to our children, then our religious priorities and values will remain ad olam - for all eternity, as they will be carried on by our children and descendants for all generations, a lesson which Rabbi Vann understood all too well after his painful visit to the house of mourners.

"When you trust in Hashem, He becomes your constant companion, guiding you through life's challenges." ~ Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk - Upstanding and Outstanding

As his death approaches, Moshe speaks to the Jewish people and says, "You are all standing here today, old and young, men and women, from the wood choppers to the water carriers."

Why did he delineate everyone and what is the message that they are all "standing" there today? The following story gives us an insight.



A number of years ago, many Jewish day schools came up with the idea of changing the curriculum of youngsters learning Gemara. The accepted practice was that the kids began learning Ailu Metzios, a chapter in Bava Metzia that discusses how to treat an object that is found, or Hamafkid, which discusses laws of guarding someone else's objects. The educators felt that these topics were perhaps not so relevant for the beginner students, and they should learn Brachos or Pesachim which dealt with the laws of Shema and Passover instead, which the boys could relate to better.

The Rebbeim in Tiferes Yerushalaim thought the idea made sense, and they wished to follow suit, but would not do so without approval from the Rosh Yeshiva, **R' Moshe Feinstein z"l**. In response, he called every Rebbi in the school into his office; perhaps the only time he ever did so. He said to them, "The choice of these sections of Gemara to begin a child's Talmud education is not a new thing, devised and decided upon in America. This has been accepted and passed down for generations. We will not change." "But I will explain to you why such is the custom," continued the sage. "It is to teach young children that being a good Jew does not start in the synagogue; it starts in the street, dealing with your fellow man. When you understand how to take care of what belongs to another

and respect it, and you become practiced in the laws between Man and his Friend, then you will succeed in those between Man and G-d. There is a reason our sages of old established this custom."

Perhaps Moshe wanted to remind everyone what made them so special. They were upright individuals who would not stoop to harming another either monetarily or emotionally and certainly not physically. It didn't matter if one was the greatest scholar or the most unlearned laborer – you are ALL upright individuals standing before HaShem.

Our Sages say that the Jews in Egypt were 'metsuyanim,'- exceptional. Anyone who saw a Jew knew who he or she was by the way they behaved. We were so outstanding because we are all upstanding. It's in our genes and we must always remember to stand tall and proud in the service of HaShem.

"You May Choose Only One of Us"

One evening there was a knock at the door and dozens of people stood outside. The owner of the house asked them who they were. One of them responded, "I am happiness. He is *emuna*. That one is wealth. This is health. The tall one is success. The hoodlum over there is power." And so he identified each one. We are your wishes and desires. - But, he said to the bewildered family, "you may choose only one of us."

The family was uncertain. Success or health? Happiness or money?

Finally, the patriarch decided, "we will take emuna." Emuna entered the house – and all of the other wishes began to follow him.

"What's going on," wondered the father, "you said we could only choose one wish?" "That's true," explained happiness, "but wherever emuna goes, we all follow!" ~ **R' Menachem Azolai**

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Brody ZT"L (1865-1913) was the Rebbe of **Rav Yeruchem Levovitz ZT"L, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein ZT"L and Rav Yoseph Nenedik ZT"L**, three Mussar giants in the holy Yeshiva of Kelm where they had studied. Rav Tzvi Hirsch imbued his students with strong Yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven) especially when dealing with issues of Bain Odom L'Chaveiro (appropriately treating one another).



Rav Chatzkel recalled that the nail clippers that were used in those times were not as effective as the ones that came into use in later years. Rav Tzvi Hirsch would be careful to file down the edges of his nails after he used the clippers. When asked why he did so, he replied that he often used Seforim that were owned by others. He said that it was not in good faith to use them if, Heaven forbid, damage could come to any of them through a nick in one of his nails. Therefore, he was very careful to file down the edges of his nails so they were smooth and would not inadvertently damage the Seforim he would use.

Growth in avodas Hashem rarely comes through dramatic transformations. More often it comes through small victories repeated consistently. A kind word, an extra moment of learning, a restrained response—these are the bricks from which greatness is built.

Reb Yoel On the Parsha

וְהָיָהׂ כִּי־יָבֹאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הַבְּרָכָהׂ וְהַקְּלָלָה 30:1 - ***"It will be that when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have presented before you…"***

The Ohr Hachaim asks, the word **והיה** indicates happiness, so how does it fit with the curses that may, *chas v'shalom*, "come upon you"?



The gemara (*Berachos* 60b) says that one is obligated to bless Hashem when something bad happens, just as he blesses Him when something good happens. Since all things that happen to us are encounters with Hashem for our ultimate benefit, we should accept happily everything that comes our way.

So the word *vehayah* does, in fact, suit this *pasuk*. A person can appreciate the bad and good alike if he realizes that everything is from Hashem.

Reb Zusha was a disciple of **Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch**. He was poor and sick, yet this did not affect his love for Hashem. A story is told that once **Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg** went to Rabbi Dov Ber and asked him the following question. "How is it possible to fulfil the obligation to bless the bad the same way as you do the good?"

Rav Dov Ber told Reb Shmelke to go to Reb Zusha to get the answer to his question. Rav Shmelke approached Reb Zusha and asked him the question. Rav Zusha was surprised by the question and answered, ***"You will have to ask someone who has actually experienced bad. I have experienced only good my entire life."***

The answer to Rav Shmelke's question was clear. A person should be so happy in every life situation that he is not even aware of the "bad."

Everything a person has is given to him by Hashem. Don't think that if something is not going well it could be better, because if it could be better, it would be better.

Rabbi Igal Cohen - Guaranteed Success

Dovid Hamelech tells us, רַבִּים מַכְאוֹבִים לָרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בַּה' חֶסֶד יְסוֹבְבֶנּוּ - "***One who trusts in Hashem, kindness will surround him.***" (Tehillim 32:10).

You will have good in your life. Anytime you encounter a difficulty in your life, don't deal with it by yourself. Thrust it upon Hashem. He is the true source who has all the strength in the world and can shower upon you all the goodness you need in your life. If you need money, place your burden and worries on Hashem. Do not be anxious about it. If you worry about it, Hashem will not worry about it. He'll leave you to your own human methods and efforts. But if you don't worry about it, Hashem will worry about it.

This is a simple formula in life. If you want guaranteed success, tell Hashem, "I am unable to manage all these things. You manage them all. I know You will give me everything I need."

And He will. If you trust in Him fully, you will get what you need.

Rav Hutner — "Struggle is not a sign of weakness but the birthplace of greatness. The fire that tests a person is the same fire that forges him."

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



The Parsha begins - אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם '***You are all standing this day before Hashem, your G-d***.' (29:9)

We say these words a mere few hours before we enter Rosh Hashana – The Yom Hadin. And the question is asked, "During Elul and Yomim Noraim, we add a tefillah twice a day to our davening - אוֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי לְדָוִד ה' – '***The L-rd is my light and my salvation***.'

Chazal tell us from a Medrash – The word אוֹרִי (***my light***) refers to Rosh Hashana. And the word וְיִשְׁעִי (***my salvation)*** refers to Yom Kippur.

Now, we can very well understand that the word וְיִשְׁעִי (***my salvation)*** refers to Yom Kippur, because Yom Kippur is the day of salvation for Klal Yisrael. It is a day that we cleanse ourselves from all our aveiros. But why does the word אוֹרִי (***my light***) refer to Rosh Hashana? Why is Rosh Hashana compared to our light? Rosh Hashana is **פחד מיום הדין?** – We are petrified of the judgement of the past year that is about to come. Why is Rosh Hashana compared to our light?

The answer is that perhaps throughout the whole year, we get distracted. We were sent to this world for a purpose. We are here

for a reason. We are here to accomplish something, but we get distracted by the music and excitement that's around us. And sometimes we can become so distracted, that we lose sight of our goal in life. And therefore, we need the light to shine to enable us to reach that goal.



A story is told of a villager who is totally unaware of modern civilisation. He is told of the idea of a cinema. There is a room that you can sit in and see pictures that are actually moving. He is astonished – How can such a thing be?

He saves up money to buy a ticket. He enters the cinema and is ushered into his seat. The room is pitch black. He is mesmerised by the experience. The darkness bothers him, so he leaves his seat and locates the nearest light switch. He switches on the lights, but simultaneously, the moving images on the big screen fade away – Nobody can see anything!

Everybody jumps out of their seats, and start screaming, "Fool, what are you doing? The only way that we can see the images clearly is when the room is in complete darkness. The light makes the images fade away."

That is Rosh Hashana. That is **אוֹרִי**. Throughout the year, and throughout our lives, where maybe we weren't so focused, where we were distracted and looking for personal pleasure, we must take Rosh Hashana and shine its light upon our lives, to enable us to reach our goal.

In this zechus, I want to wish everyone a **כתיבה וחתימה טובה**

As the year draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you & your family a **כתיבה וחתימה טובה**! May you have a year filled with only Nachas and Gezunt, and Brocha V' Hatzlocha in all that you do!

May this be the year that we are Mekabel Moshiach **במהרה בימינו**!

Good Shabbos and good YomTov!

Three Jewish People



A Rebbe asked his talmidim, "If you were able to invite three Jewish people for dinner from our collective Jewish history, who would you invite?

Some people said, "My father – I miss him, my grandfather – Others said my Rebbe – I would love to have dinner with the Rambam. Einstein. Others said, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov.

The Rebbe said that the best answer that he got was from **Rav Dovid Feinstein Zt'l** – "I can invite any Jewish people from history that I want?"

"Yes."

"So, I would invite three hungry Jews!"

"Three hungry Jews? – Brilliant!"

Why is it brilliant? Because all the other answers were all about ME! Who wouldn't want to put on his resume that he once had lunch with the Rambam? Who doesn't want to have a photo in his album, hugging Avraham and Yitzchok Avinu? – It's all about ME!

Rav Dovid Feinstein polished his middos so much, that it was all about others! What can I do for other people!

Arguments, slander and hatred destroyed the Beis Hamikdash. Thinking about others first, will build the Beis Hamikdash.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלֵאת הִוא מִמְּךָ וְלֹא־רְחֹקָה הִוא *'For this commandment which I command you this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away.'* (31:11-14)

לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִוא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָּנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְיִקָּחֶהָ לָּנוּ וְיַשְׁמִעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה *It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us and fetch it for us, to tell [it] to us, so that we can fulfil it?"*

וְלֹא־מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם הִוא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲבָר־לָנוּ אֶל־עֵבֶר הַיָּם וְיִקָּחֶהָ לָּנוּ וְיַשְׁמִעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה *Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and fetch it for us, to tell [it] to us, so that we can fulfil it?"*

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ *Rather, [this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfil it.*

The Meforshim say these pesukim are referring to Torah and Teshuvah and appear in our parsha at an apt time of the year.

The Alshich says on the words - מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָּנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה: We find that the Roshei Teivos spell out the word **מילה**. And the Sofei Teivos are **י-ה-ו-ה**. The Alshich asks – surely the name of Hashem should come first as the Roshei Teivos and the Mitzvah should come secondary as the Soifei Teivos?

There is obviously a message that the Torah is hinting to over here. The Alshich therefore says that if you discard all the letters of the Roshei Teivos and the Soifei Teivos, you are left with the letters –

ע-ל-נ-ש-מ-י-מ -These are gematria of **ישראל** -540 (541 with the kolel). So, the middle letters refer to Klal Yisrael. Hence, for a Yid to have the name Yisrael, first he must have Bris Milah. Then he considered as part of Yisrael. And then Hashem stamps his Name of approval onto us.

The Kli Yakar says how beautiful and important the mitzvah of Milah is, that Hashem places this mitzvah even before His own Name! This is hinted to in Tehillim 138:2 **כִּי־הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שִׁמְךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ** - '***For You magnified Your word over all Your names***.'

What is אִמְרָתֶךָ? Milah**-** **שָׂשׂ אָנֹכִי עַל אִמְרָתֶךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלָל רָב** **–** '***I rejoice over Your word as one who finds great spoil.***' (119:162)

Milah gives such nachas to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that He gives it precedence over the position of His Name.

The Ben Ish Chai iterates this idea by saying that even the name **ישראל** comes before Hashem's name as well, displaying how much Hashem values Klal Yisrael!

ישראל is therefore flanked on either side by **מילה** and **י-ה-ו-ה**. If you add up the gematria of these two words, (26 and 85) you get 111 which is **פלא** (wonders!) – as mentioned in the Pasuk in the Shirah (Shemos 15:11) - **נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא**.

What precedes these words? **וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם֙ חוֹמָ֣ה מִימִינָ֔ם וּמִשְׂמֹאלָֽם** (14:22) There was a protecting wall on either side of Klal Yisrael – The Shem HaShem and the mitzvah of Milah! And Hashem made a **פלא** by putting Klal Yisrael in the middle!

This shows how every Yid (who has Bris Milah) is very important to The Ribboino Shel Olam!

Chofetz Chaim — "A person's tongue is small, yet it can build worlds. Guard it well, for nothing is more precious."

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series –

וְהָיָה֮ כִּֽי־יָבֹ֣אוּ עָלֶ֣יךָ כָּל־הַדְּבָרִ֣ים הָאֵ֗לֶּה הַבְּרָכָה֙ וְהַקְּלָלָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר נָתַ֖תִּי לְפָנֶ֑יךָ וַהֲשֵׁבֹתָ֙ אֶל־לְבָבְךָ֔ בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִ֕ם אֲשֶׁ֥ר הִדִּיחֲךָ֖ ה' אֱלֹקֶֽיךָ שָׁמָּ֑ה '***And it will be, when all these things come upon you the blessing and the curse which I have set before you that you will consider in your heart, among all the nations where Hashem has banished you***.' (30:1)

The Pasuk is telling us, that when the bracha and the klalla come, then we will return to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The word הִדִּיחֲךָ means - '***pushed you away***.'

The Shlah Hakadosh says that the Pasuk doesn't say that Hashem has '***thrown you there***'. When someone throws something, he no longer has control over it, but when it is pushed away, it is close enough to retrieve it at any time!

Hashem has '***pushed***' us into Galus and can retrieve us at any time!

The Ohr Hachaim asks- "What does the mention of bracha over here have to do with doing teshuvah?

He answers that when a person recognises the difference between brachas and klallos, it will bring a person to do teshuva.

Perhaps we can understand this better in light of *Berachot* 54 that "one must recite a bracha when he experiences something he perceives as a blessing as well as when he experiences something which appears to him as evil."

The Talmud there on folio 60 goes so far as to say that even when we experience something which we perceive as evil we must accept it joyfully. ...

"The Torah is not a book of the past. It is the eternal voice guiding the present." ~ Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Sing it!

אָשִׁירָה לַה׳ - "***I Will Sing to Hashem***" (Tehillim 13:6)

Don't just say your Emunah – Sing your Emunah!

Don't just say "It's for the good" – Sing "It's for the good!"

You are not musical? You need not be. Singing doesn't necessarily mean to sing, rather it is a form of happy expression. When you declare your Emunah, do it with happiness, even though you don't feel like it.

This is what will help your Emunah truly come alive. ~ R' Dov Brezak

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Probing Approbations

We know that many receive haskamos (rabbinic endorsements) before printing their sefer. However, this wasn't always the case. The practice of obtaining haskamos was generally not welcomed initially due to their non-Jewish origin. As a result, a number of notable sefarim were published without any haskamos.

Haskamos gained popularity and became mainstream following the Shabbsai Tzvi fiasco in the 1600s and the subsequent messianic fervor. This was in order to safeguard against the inclusion of heretical ideas in books. By the 1700s, nearly every sefer had haskamos.

The Chassam Sofer (1762-1839) was a big proponent of a sefer having haskamos, as he writes in a teshuva. On the other hand, the Pele Yoatz17 (1785-1828) as well as **R' Yonasan Eibshitz** (1690-1764) opposed the idea of receiving haskamos for a sefer.

The Pele Yoatz writes that he was displeased with this idea because it's like the author saying "honour me" since the haskamos are in order to glorify and exalt the author…

aish.com

The Radical Chasidic Rabbi We Need More Than Ever





The Kotzker Rebbe was fiercely committed to truth and authenticity.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, the Kotzker Rebbe, was a 19th-century Hasidic Rabbi known for his sharp wit, radical teachings, and uncompromising approach to Judaism.

Despite his influence on Jewish thought, the Kotzker Rebbe was a reclusive figure who spent the last 25 years of his life living alone in the forest, scaling the heights of spirituality.

Born into a distinctly non-Hasidic family in 1787 (-1859) , the young Menachem Mendel became attracted to the central tenets of Hasidic thought, namely that of emotional cleaving to G-d, serious spiritual introspection, and truth. As he evolved into a spiritual figure in his own right, the Kotzker was expelled from the town of Tomaszów, as his congregants were simply too uncomfortable with his rigorous expectations of the self. Finding solace in the nearby town of Kotzk, the Rebbe would live there for the remainder of his life, never leaving the area again.

Indeed, although his sons tried to carry the mantle of leadership after his death, the movement was strictly limited to the Rebbe's lifetime, as his demands for spiritual purity were too much for later generations to adhere to.

For example, the Rebbe held that prayer done simply to fulfil one's religious obligation is nothing short of idolatry. Prayer can only be performed when the individual subjects himself to total submission to the Divine will, something human beings typically fall short of. His expectations exceeded the religious sphere and permeated daily routines. He criticized man's constant desire to accommodate the judgments of others, famously explaining: "***If I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you. But if I am I because you are you and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you***!"

Tellingly, the world of Kotzk is seldom studied or understood, owing somewhat to its limited acceptance in the broader Jewish community and its scrupulous standards.

The Pursuit of Truth

The Kotzker Rebbe was known for his radical teachings which challenged conventional wisdom. He believed that the pursuit of truth was the highest goal of Judaism, which required a willingness to question and challenge established norms and beliefs. At a time when charismatic Rabbinic leaders competed for spiritual followers, it was his disdain for such a practice that ultimately led to his isolation. Ironically, the more he rejected his growing influence, the larger his following became.

He emphasized the importance of individual responsibility, believing each person had a unique role in the world and that it was up to the individual to fulfil his or her own potential and purpose.

The Kotzker would routinely chastise individuals for making the trek to Kotzk to seek a blessing from him, which was customary for a

Hasidic Rebbe to give to his adherents. He viewed a personal blessing as too often being used as a quick spiritual fix to their woes. Instead of praying for his practitioners, he would encourage them to seek their own salvation through personal reflection and repentance and take ownership of one's own spiritual journey.

The Kotzker Rebbe had no tolerance for faux pas religious piety. He believed that true religious devotion could not be measured by outward displays of religious observance, but rather by a person's inner commitment to living a life of integrity and righteousness.

He had a deep concern for social equity and believed that Jews were responsible for actively working towards creating a more just society built on the precepts of truth. He believed that the wealthy and powerful had a responsibility to use their resources to help those in need. He would often cite the ideal practice of a leader: when faced with a cold snap, many opt to warm themselves in a fur coat. The true mark of the righteous is when they instead build a fire, thereby ensuring those who gather around will also be consoled.

Similarly, when his wife Glike Nay noticed their silverware had been stolen, the Kotzker was completely unperturbed. "Impossible," he exclaimed. "The Torah explicitly teaches us not to steal. It simply cannot be, therefore, that a Jew would steal." His genuine desire to live in a world strictly adhering to G-d's will often made him unwilling, and perhaps unable, to consider that others wouldn't.

"The holiest time is today. The holiest person is you, and the holiest place is right here."

After someone mentioned that the holiest time of the year is the last moment on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement before the Gates of Heaven close, the Kotzker banged his fist on the table: "No, no, and no!" he yelled. "The holiest time is today. The holiest person is you, and the holiest place is right here." Such teachings represent the essence of the Kotzker: unabashedly confident as to the spiritual heights any individual is capable of reaching.

The Kotzker Rebbe was deeply respected by his followers and has continued to influence Jewish thought to this day, albeit in more subliminal ways. He deliberately burnt all of his Torah novellas and writings in a fire, horrified that people in later generations would rely on his approach to Judaism rather than devise their own.

Reb Mendel was a new type of chasid. If the **Baal Shem Tov** embodied *chesed* , Reb Mendel represented *din*. While the Baal Shem sought to reach all the people, Reb Mendel knew that what he sought could only be attained by the elite. The Baal Shem lifted the people up, Reb Mendel rebuked them for their inadequacies and always demanded more.

Reb Mendel attracted a young, brilliant, aspiring youth. He demanded withering self-analysis and disdained mitzvos performed with a whiff of self-interest. He recognized the centrality of the ego but refused to accept it. He demanded uncompromising truth without self-interest. He cried out, "Give me ten chasidim who will follow me to the desert, eat manna and forsake the decadent world."

Reb Leibel Eiger was entranced by Kotzk, to the despair of his father, Rabbi Shlomo. Upon returning home his father asked what he had learned in Kotzk. Reb Leibel replied: I learned three things, that a man is a man and an angel is an angel; that if a man wants it enough he can be higher than an angel; and that G-d created the Beginning (Bereishis), just the Beginning, thereafter man must create his world.

Reb Mendel and Reb Mordechai Yosef of Ishbitz had been close friends and disciples of Reb Simcha Bunem of Pshischa. After Reb Bunem's passing Reb Mendel became Rebbe. However, because of Reb Mendel's extreme aloofness the two friends were travelling on a collision course. Finally, on the Simchas Torah of 1840 there was an irrevocable split between the two and Reb Mordechai Yosef left with his chassidim to form a new chassidus.

The paradox of Reb Mendel was his awareness of man's weakness but his non-acquiescence. He once said that if one tried to break the *yetzer* he would end up with two *yetzers* thus conceding the impossibility of overcoming it. Yet, he refused to compromise his aspiration for ultimate truth and pure action.

One of Reb Mendel's chasidim, Reb Shemaya, lay on his deathbed and was asked by a fellow Kotzker whether the yetzer still bothered him at that moment. "Of course, he replied," don't you see him standing at the foot of my bed whispering into my ear, 'Reb Shemaya say Shma Yisrael in a loud voice and draw out the echad'". Reb Shemaya continued, "I recognize the thief — he is trying to seduce me to say Shma Yisrael in order that you will say that Reb Shemaya left this world in pure state.

Reb Mendel's path did not attract a large following. It demanded from human beings the unattainable. Yet, his search and his critique have become part of the spiritual treasure house of Klal Yisrael.

Undoubtedly, the Kotzker would probably be furious to learn that 164 years after his death, this article was being written. Nevertheless, his authentic and unique approach to man's relationship with the world at large and with the Creator of the world, as well as his immovable quest for authenticity makes him a surely needed figure today.

whY I Matter - Reb Yedidye Hirtenfeld

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת־הָרָע See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil. [30:15]

"Good", not "life", is the most significant word in this verse. This indicates that one should not do good in order to live; rather, one should live in order to do good. – (**Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk**)

Tefillah Against Talking in Shul by the Tosafos Yom Tov

During the infamous pogroms of Ta"ch V'Ta"t (years 5408 and 5409 – 1648-1649) the Tosafos Yom Tov fasted and beseeched that from on High it be revealed to him why such terrible calamities had befallen the Jewish people. It was revealed to him from on High that there was lightheaded, idle chatter in shul. People spoke in shul and in the middle of davening, which caused a blemish in the letter "vav" and the word for speech, dibur, was transformed into dever, a plague!



מי שברך

אותו התקין לומר בעל התוס' יו"ט זי"ע
עקב הגזרות בשנות ת"ח ות"ט עליהם אמר שבא עקב
מיכשול הדיבור בשעת התפילה

מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב,
מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן, דָּוִד וּשְׁלֹמֹה, הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת כָּל מִי
שֶׁשּׁוֹמֵר פִּיו וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ שֶׁלֹּא לְדַבֵּר בְּעֵת הַתְּפִלָּה,
הַקָּבָ"ה יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ מִכָּל צָרָה וְצוּקָה וּמִכָּל נֶגַע
וּמַחֲלָה, וְיָחוֹלוּ עָלָיו כָּל הַבְּרָכוֹת הַכְּתוּבוֹת בְּסֵפֶר
תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ וּבְכָל סִפְרֵי הַנְּבִיאִים וְהַכְּתוּבִים,
וְיִזְכֶּה לִרְאוֹת בָּנִים חַיִּים וְקַיָּמִים וְיַגְדִּלֵם לְתוֹרָה
וּלְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, וְיַעֲבוֹד אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ
תָּמִיד בֶּאֱמֶת וּבְתָמִים וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

גבאי ביהכ"נ מתבקשים, להנהיג אמירת ה"י מי
שבירך" מידי שבת לפני תפילת מוסף ויהי
רצון שכל הברכות יחולו עלינו

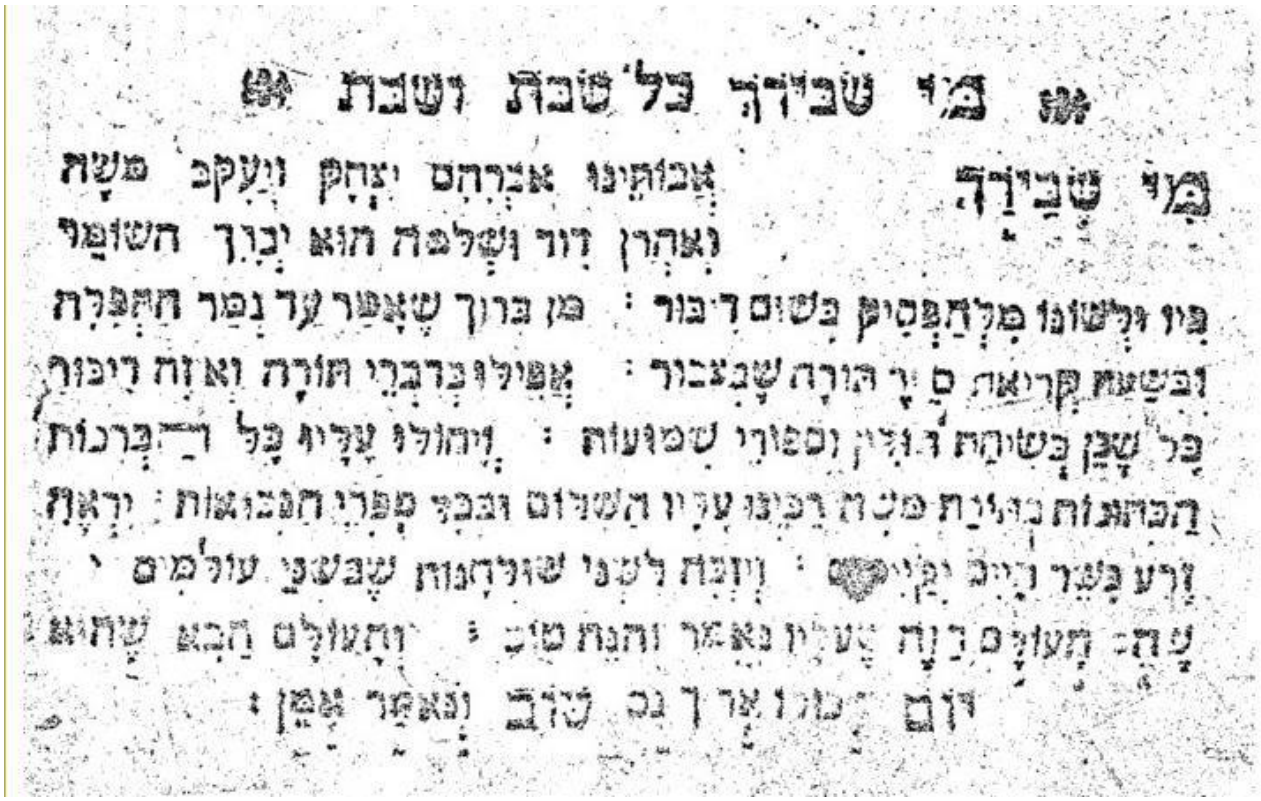
הוסק ע"י:
מרכז קאליב העולמי אהרנטבירן 20
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בני-ברק

When he learned of this, he composed a special prayer (others say the **Maharal** composed it but the Tosafos Yom Tov instituted and enacted its recitation in his kehillos. See the original nusach below) to help increase the awareness of the power of silence in shul, the destructive nature of idle chatter, and talking in shul and during davening.

The mi she'berach of the Tosafos Yom Tov

It is printed in many siddurim alongside the Mi Sheberach we recite on Shabbos after the reading of the Torah. We reproduce it for you here as well as its translation: Illustration 1: Mi Sheberach of Tosafos Yom Tov current version found in most Siddurim. '*He who blessed our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Moshe and*

Aharon, Dovid and Shlomo, shall bless all those who guard their mouth and tongue so as to not speak during the time of tefillah. May the Holy One protect them from all troubles and calamities and all affliction and sickness. May all the blessings written in the Sefer Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu, as well as the prophets and writings (of Tanach) descend to rest upon him. And may he merit to see children and grandchildren alive and well, and to raise them and marry them off to Torah, chuppah and good deeds. May he serve Hashem our G-d forever, fully, and purely, and sincerely. Let us say and answer Amen.'


מי שברך כל שבת ושבת

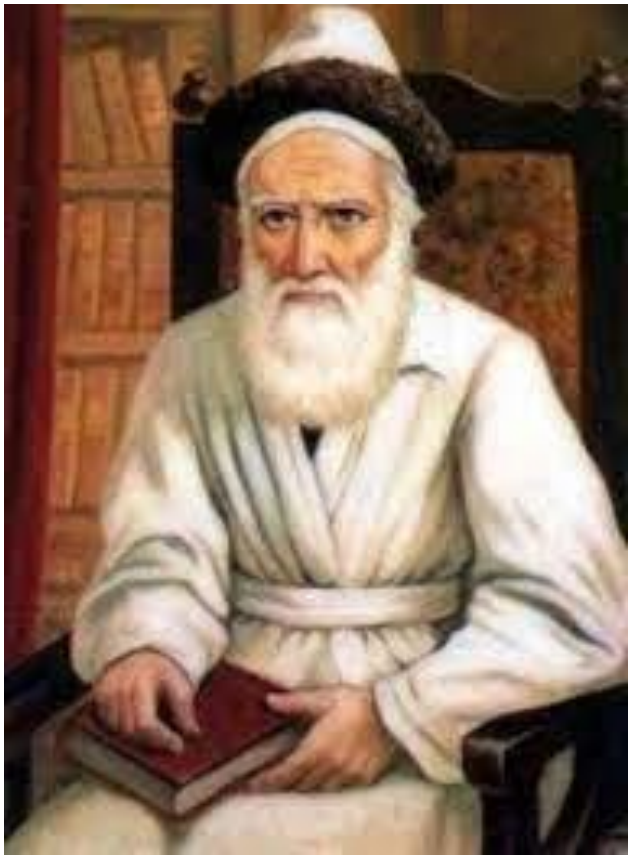
מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב משה
וְאַהֲרֹן דָּוִד וּשְׁלֹמֹה הוּא יְבָרֵךְ הַשּׁוֹמֵר
פִּיו וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ מִלְּהַפְסִיק בְּשׁוּם דִּבּוּר : מִן בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאָמַר עַד נִפְטָר תְּפִלָּה
וּבְשָׁעַת קְרִיאַת סֵ"ר הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּצִבּוּר : אֲפִילּוּ בְּדִבְרֵי תּוֹרָה וְאַזְהָרָה וְכוּ'
כָּל שֶׁכֵּן בְּשִׁיחַת חוֹל וְכִפּוּרֵי שְׁמוּעוֹת : וְיִחוֹלוּ עָלָיו כָּל הַבְּרָכוֹת
הַכְּתוּבוֹת בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם וּבְכִתְבֵי קָדְשֵׁי הַנְּבִיאִים : יִרְאֶה
זֶרַע בְּנִים וּבְנֵי בָנִים עוֹשִׂים : וְזָכָה לִרְאוֹת שִׁבְעָה שַׁבְּשַׁבָּתוֹת שְׁלֵמִים
עֵדֶה תְּעוּדָם נָעִים נֶאְמָר וְחַיִּים טוֹבִים : וְלָעוֹלָם הַבָּא שֶׁיִּהְיֶה
כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן :

Illustration 2: Ancient Version of Mi Sheberach attributed to Maharal or Tosafos Yom Tov, his disciple.

Sfas Emes — "Truth is the inner point of every Jew, hidden beneath layers of habit and fear. When one awakens that point, all the barriers fall away, and the soul returns to its Source."

TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866), known as the "Tzemach Tzedek," was the third Rebbe of Chabad. He asks, "What's the difference between children and adults?"



He answers – "Adults keep grudges, whereas children don't keep grudges."

How many times does your young child tell you 'Tatti, I hate you, I'm not speaking to you again!' Ten minutes later, you give them ice cream, and they're your best friends again.

'Mammy, I hate you, I wish I had a different mammy.' Ten minutes later, you give them a hug, and then you are the best mammy in the world.

An adult tells you, "I'm not speaking to you again." – 15 years later, they still do not say 'Good Shabbos' to you! They don't invite you to their grandchildren's Bar Mitzvos.

Asks the Tzemach Tzedek, "Children are immature – Why do adults keep grudges, and children forget right away?

Because children choose being happy over being right, whereas adults choose being right over being happy." We would rather be miserable, as long as we are right.

I won't speak to my uncle, I won't speak to my brother, I won't speak to my sister-in-law, I won't speak to my sister, I won't speak to my business partner for 25 years.

Chas V'sholom to pick up the phone to say I'm sorry. I'm going to be right. I'll be miserable – but I'll be right!

So, when the Mishna says in Yumah that Yom Kippur can only atone between man and Hashem, - between man and man, you have to speak to them in person. Even The Riboino Shel Olam says, "I'm sorry, even though I'm the creator of the world, I can't help you. I can only forgive you for what you did to Me. I can't forgive you for what you did to him."

So, I want to bless you all – That you should come to the realisation that you cannot afford to have negative energy between ourselves, between people, which is a terrible thing.

We should have the courage and conviction to be able to build bridges and peace between people. Not to bear grudges and carry resentments.

Two Watches - The 25th Hour by Rabbi Dov Keilson



The Amshinover Rebbe was spending time with his chassidim on Erev Yom Kippur and he asked them what time it was.

Two chassidim answered, each with a different response. One said, "It is late!" and the other said, "There is still time."

The Rebbe said that both are correct perspectives on this very great and lofty day: Every Jew always needs two watches, one that says, "It is already late," and the other that says, "There is still time."

And that is really the perspective all the time: On the one hand, it is getting late. On the other hand, baruch Hashem, there is still time….

Someone to Talk To 👤 By R' Yisroel Majeski



There was a beautiful Yid in my community who was niftar just over one and a half years ago. He was a simple man whose mantra was –"*Good is simple and simple is good.*"

His son said that whenever there was a kiddush in shul, his father was always the last one to leave and return home. His father was not a big eater, and it was strange.

Finally, as the kids got older, they asked their father why he was always the last to leave the shul kiddush.

The father said, "Every time that there is a kiddush, I do a scouting report. I look around the whole shul and search out anybody who has no-one to talk to! Inevitably, there is always somebody who is standing by themselves with no-one to talk to. So, I wait and I go and sit down next to that guy and talk to him!"

We must be alert and be in the zone to seek out and pick up those people that might need a few friendly words of chizzuk.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The Dubno Maggid brings the following parable: There was once a grocery owner who made his year-end calculations.

He realised that he was in debt, and if he didn't get a loan immediately, his business would go bankrupt.

He went to see the town's G'vir (wealthy man), but the G'vir's assistant didn't allow him in – "He's busy right now."

"So, when can I meet with him?"

"In a few hours."

So, the storeowner hung around outside for the next three hours, pacing back and forth, under a load of stress.

He knocks on the door again hoping to be allowed in now. Again the assistant held him back saying, "You still can't go in, you must still wait."

He continued waiting anxiously outside. If he didn't get this loan, his business was finished, and he would be forced to close for good.

A while later, the wealthy man came outside to go to shul to daven Mincha. The store owner took this opportunity to approach him and ask him for a loan. He assured him that he had reliable and trustworthy guarantors. The wealthy man immediately loaned him the money.

As the wealthy man enters the shul to daven Mincha, another Yid approaches him and says, "It's great that I'm bumping into you, I could do with a loan!"

The wealthy man responds, "I'm sorry, but I can't give out any loans today."

"But you gave the shop- keeper a loan?"

"You're comparing yourself to him? He waited for many hours, pacing backwards and forwards. I saw that he really needed this loan desperately, so I gave him a loan. You however, only happened to 'bump' into me, and you claim that you need a loan."

The Maggid says that the same thing applies to our preparation to Rosh Hashana. - Someone who prepares himself during the month of Elul, with Tehillim, davening and teshuvah, then, when Rosh Hashana comes, Hashem will be merciful! He will be deserving of Hashem's mercy.

Then there is another person who hasn't been doing anything during Elul. So when Rosh Hashana comes, he just happens to 'bump' into

Hashem, and remembers that he would like to have a good year! The point is to utilize the month of Elul, and prepare for Rosh Hashana.

The Riboino Shel Olam should grant everybody a **כתיבה וחתימה טובה** and everybody should be granted a sweet year.

Kiddush Hashem: Bank Employees Stunned When Jewish Man Hands Them Missing Cash

A Boro Park yungerman made a tremendous kiddush hashem this week when he returned money inadvertently given to him by employees of Chase Bank.

YWN has learned through a third party that the story occurred on Monday, when a kollel yungerman withdrew $5,000 in cash at the Chase Bank branch at 13th Avenue and 48th Street in Boro Park.


SALES DRAFT

JPMorgan Chase, NA
Thirteenth Ave and 48th St, Branch 747376
4724 13th Ave
Brooklyn, NY 0000011219
Terminal 002

Merchant # 5350596
ending in: 8135 XX/XX
Auth. Trans. ID MPVUDMUL4
Auth. Code 025037
BIN# 5115
Card Type: Mastercard
Method: Swipe

SALE AMOUNT $5,000.00

I agree to pay above total amount
according to card issuer agreement
(Merchant agreement, if credit voucher)

Upon returning home, the man counted up the bills and quickly realized that he had been handed $6,000 – not the $5,000 he had withdrawn. He checked the receipt which confirmed that he had only taken out $5,000 from his account.

The next morning, the Jewish man returned to the bank and handed a teller $1,000 in cash, explaining that he had been given more money than he had withdrawn.

The bank employees were stunned. They told him that they had noticed the missing money but were utterly flummoxed by it. They certainly were not expecting a customer to return that money to them.

The yungerman didn't stay around to be praised. He left the bank and went back to learning in kollel, completely uninterested in the attention that would have surely come his way.

Mi K'Amcha Yisroel.

Comfort Zone - Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair



Firmly embedded in our cultural discourse is the metaphor of leaving one's comfort zone. The phrase actually became popular in the 1990s, when it was coined by management thinker Judith Bardwick. But the concept can be traced back as far as 1907, when Robert Yerkes and John Dodson conducted one of the first experiments that illuminated the link between anxiety and performance.

They saw that mice became more motivated to complete mazes when given electric shocks of increasing intensity, but only up to a point. Above a certain threshold, the mice began to hide rather than perform. They applied this idea to the human mind, namely that our nervous system has a Goldilocks zone of arousal. Too little, and you remain in the comfort zone where boredom starts to set in; and yet with too much, you enter the panic zone, which also stops progress.

I was thinking that you can apply the same principle to our spiritual growth. The Midrash tells us, "There is no blade of grass in the field that grows unless a spiritual messenger stands over it, hits it and

says, "Grow." Why does this spiritual messenger need to hit the blade of grass? Wouldn't some less violent form of encouragement be sufficient?

In Hebrew, the word for earth is eretz, which can be read as, "I will run." This world is a place of running forward, of striving. Eretz is related to the word ratzon, which means will or desire. What a person desires is what he will toward. The word for heaven in Hebrew is Shamayim, from the root sham, which literally means "There." "Theres" in the plural refers to the total sum of all that there is and all that there could ever be. In other words, shamayim is the ideal, the perfect form. Everything that is inchoate, incomplete in this world finds its perfection "sham," there, in Heaven. There, in Heaven, there exists the perfect form of that particular blade of grass, and the discrepancy between what is and what should be is perceived as a blow, a smack.

One of the most difficult things in this world is to change, to become more than we are, and to realize our true potential. We don't want to change. We'd rather sit by the pool and watch the water lilies float to and fro. Any change is painful. And yet the month of Elul is the time that demands of us to leave our comfort zone and realize our true spiritual potential.

למודי משה

כי תבא - גליון קפ"ז

The Mitzvah of Teshuva

R' Leib Chasman would often relate, that regarding all the Yomim Tovim there is a mitzvah to learn the *halachos* related to the upcoming Yom Tov from 30 days prior to the Yom Tov.

This is especially applicable to *bnei* Torah, who are particular to learn all the ins and outs and understand everything that is behind the *mitzvos* related to the upcoming Yom Tov.

Regarding the mitzvah of *teshuva* there is no particular time, and one must busy himself with the mitzvah of *teshuva* day and night, throughout one's entire life, in the days leading up to the Yomim Noraim, one should learn the *Halachos* of *teshuva*.

R' Leib Chasman would bring a *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* from where it is clear, that even though the primary time for *teshuva* is on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, one must prepare for at least 30 days prior.

Similarly, **R' Shlomah Zalman Auerbach** would often bemoan the fact, that in the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur people would ask him many questions regarding *Hilchos Tekias Shofar*, and *Hilchos Ta'anis*, however, rarely would he be asked about *Hilchos Teshuva*.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Selichos

The *sefarim* write that the *yamim noraim* begin on the first night of *selichos*. **Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zt'l*** said that the **כתיבה וחתימה** of Rosh Hashanah begins on the first night of *selichos*.

Once, before *selichos*, **Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l*** told the *chazan*, "Hoych! Hoych! Daven loudly because this will rouse the community to say *selichos* with *kavanah* and *hislahavus*. "Don't be afraid that you might become hoarse because others can take your place."

Someone asked **Reb Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld *zt'l***, "I'm a *melamed*, and it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deah* 245:17) that a *melamed* must sleep well. Perhaps I shouldn't go to *selichos* because that would cause me not to get enough sleep."

Reb Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld replied, "I don't see any *heter* for you not to wake up for *selichos*." These are special days to pour our hearts out before the King and to request for our lives.

In our weak generation, most people don't fast. Nevertheless, we must remember that these are special days, and we should spend them with teshuvah and tefillah to arouse Hashem's compassion.

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l once travelled by foot because he couldn't afford to hire a wagon. Someone stopped his horse and buggy beside Rebbe Dovid and offered him a ride.

When they arrived at their destination, Rebbe Dovid thanked him and said, "I have a beis medresh in Lelov. Come there on the

first night of *selichos*."

The man thought, "I did him a favour, and now he wants to take advantage of me to make certain he will have a minyan for *selichos*. One thing is certain: I am not going to his beis medresh for *selichos*."

On the first night of *selichos*, Rebbe Dovid entered his beis medresh and looked around. The person who gave him the ride wasn't there yet, so he returned to his room.

A few times, he entered the beis medresh, looked around, and when he didn't see the person who drove him, he returned to his study.

At this time, the one who gave him a ride was in his village, which was near Lelov. He thought to himself, "Rebbe Dovid is a holy man. He asked me to come to his beis medresh for *selichos*. Why shouldn't I go?" He drove to the Lelover Rebbe's beis medresh.

This time, when the Rebbe came out, he saw him and immediately began the *selichos*. After *selichos*, he told him, "You did me a favour this year, and I wanted to give you a *brachah*. I asked you to come on the first day of *selichos* since it is a great *eis ratzon* in heaven for the *brachos* to take effect. I give you a brachah that you and your descendants should enjoy immense wealth and long lives."

This account was relayed to me by the great-grandson of the recipient of this brachah. He attested, "I am a direct descendant of this individual, and I can testify that the blessing has been

fulfilled. Throughout the subsequent generations, our family has experienced prosperity, and everyone has enjoyed long lives."

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Cope and Scope



We say to a mourner the consoling phrase, *Hamakom yenachem eschem b'soch she'ar aveilei Tzion v'Yerushalayim*, May the Omnipresent console you among the other mourners of Tzion and Yerushalayim.

A pertinent question arises: Why do we invoke Hashem to provide comfort to the mourner instead of focusing on the role of the visitor, who is typically the one offering solace?

The answer is that our ability to truly understand and internalize the depth of the mourner's grief is often constrained. Genuine comfort stems from a profound comprehension of the bereaved individual's anguish. For instance, how can an individual truly fathom the emotions of someone who spent the past year watching over an ailing parent in a hospital or the pain of someone who has suddenly lost a child?

These situations are deeply personal, and entering the shoes of such a mourner is often beyond our human capacity. Only Hashem can truly empathize and console in a manner that acknowledges the full scope of their loss.

Parshah Pearls *(Adapted from the P'ninei Torah)*

Speech, Thoughts & Actions

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ - "Because the thing is very close to you, with your mouth, and in your hearts, to do it" (30:14).

These three things incorporate the entire Avodas Hashem of a Jew, who must serve with his speech, with his thoughts and with his actions.

A Good Heart

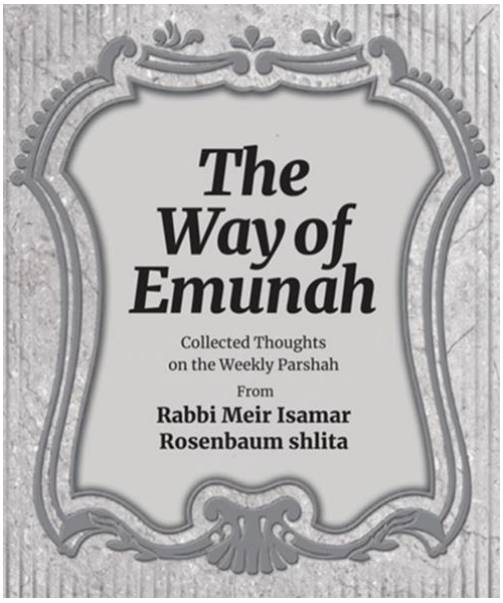
וְהִתְבָּרֵךְ בִּלְבָבוֹ לֵאמֹר שָׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה־לִּי …" and he will bless himself in his heart saying, 'Peace will be with me' " (29:18).

There are many people, says the **K'sav Sofer**, who transgress every conceivable sin. They justify themselves by claiming that what is important is a good heart, as if a person with a good heart has a carte blanche to perform every sin under the sun.

But it is precisely with such people in mind that the Torah writes here "And he will bless himself on account of his good heart, saying 'Peace will be with me' ". However, the Torah concludes "Hashem will not be willing to forgive him ... ".

Perhaps the people about whom we are speaking mistakenly base their warped theory on Chazal, who have said that 'G-d wants the heart'.

If they do, they are sorely mistaken, for Chazal did not mean that G-d wants the heart at the expense of the rest of the body, but that every (good) deed that one performs should stem from the heart; in other words, it should be performed with sincerity, and not by rote.



The Avodah of Being B'Simcha

וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה אַתָּה וְזַרְעֶךָ ***And choose life so that you shall live…and your offspring.*** (30:19)

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz zy"a says that serving Hashem with joy and enthusiasm is called "chaim" because it makes a person lively and happy. However, if a person serves Hashem without joy and enthusiasm, the opposite is true.

The difference between serving Hashem with joy and serving Him without joy is that when one serves Hashem with simcha, he passes down his tradition to future generations, who gladly will follow in his ways. On the other hand, when one serves Hashem with no joy, his children won't want to emulate him, and they won't follow in his way.

This is hinted to in this pasuk. It says to choose "life", i.e., a life of serving Hashem with simcha, so that you and your offspring shall live, as this type of avodah will be passed on to future generations.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Elya Dessler, zt"l, once said that there is a story of a Russian citizen walking in the dark, in the middle of the night. A soldier from the Russian army ordered him to stop once, twice, and three times, but he did not. Finally, the soldier said, "In the name of Czar Nikolai the Great, I order you to stop!" But the citizen did not stop.

The soldier shot him in the leg, and then learned that the person he shot was not a terrorist or a criminal, but he was simply a person who did not want to be ordered around.

When the citizen sued the soldier for hurting him, the soldier's defence, which was accepted by the court, was, "At the very least,

when I ordered him to stop in the name of Czar Nikolai, he should have stopped."

Rav Dessler said, "We must recognize that the time has now come for us to stop and realize the importance of the moment we are in, in Chodesh Elul. If we would only take a look back at the events of the prior year, we must realize that they all emanated from the previous Rosh Hashanah, and the events that will occur next year will emanate from the several days that are just ahead of us. Let us use these days wisely, and to their utmost!"

Rabbi Shimon Kaplin - אלול The Whole Year Long



Someone once came before the Manchester **ראש ישיבה** and told him, "**The Kotzker Rebbe** would say **תפנו אל אל האלילים** - don't turn toward the "**אלול**", don't make such a *major-zach* out of **חודש אלול**."

The **ראש ישיבה** said to this **איד**, "Go to the **קבר** of the Kotzker and ask him **מחילה**. Such a **עולה**, to say such a thing in the name of the Kotzker! Go quickly!"

"But the Kotzker said it?" the man asked innocently.

"You misunderstood the words of the Kotzker," the **ראש ישיבה** explained, "the Kotzker meant, "the entire year must be **אלול** ! The entire year we must be **מחזק** ourselves, it shouldn't just be in **חודש אלול**."

As **ר' ישראל סלנטר זצ"ל** would say, "The entire year must be "**אלול**", but **אלול** itself certainly must be a **אלול**."

Good Advice is Better Than Chiddushei Torah

טַפְּכֶם נְשֵׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ מֵחֹטֵב עֵצֶיךָ עַד שֹׁאֵב מֵימֶיךָ ***Your little ones, your wives, and the stranger who is in your camp, from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water****. (29:10)*



The Chiddushei Harim zy"a once asked **Rav Menachem Mendel of Vorka zy"a** why the pasuk says "***from your woodchoppers to your water drawers***." Why are woodchoppers mentioned before water drawers?

Rav Menachem Mendel answered, **חֹטֵב עֵצֶיךָ** (woodchoppers) actually refers to people who give 'eitzos' (advice) to help their fellow Jews in times of need. That is a more distinguished thing to be than 'a water drawer', which refers to those who draw out the waters of Torah by creating chiddushei Torah!



וְלֹא־מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם הִוא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲבָר־לָנוּ אֶל־עֵבֶר הַיָּם ***Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us****…?"* 30:13

R' Yaakov Yosef Herman zt"l, emigrated from Vilna to New York City with his parents as a child and was left on his own a few years later after the family returned to Europe.

He is legendary for being one of the pioneers that upheld *Torah* Jewry in America. He took a strong stance behind righteous individuals and fought a long and hard battle to uphold the laws of the *Torah* in America.

One year before the *Yamim Noraim*, a visitor came by. "I have a surprise, Rabbi," he said. "Do you recall Shmeril Burkes of Vilna? Well, just now I passed a synagogue where I saw that he was advertised as the *Chazzan* (cantor) of the congregation. We know that he is not skilled in the art; I wonder how he became a *Chazzan*?"

"I'm not surprised," answered R' Yaakov Yosef, "Crossing the ocean did him so much good that it made a *Chazzan* out out of him. This is not the first time this has happened."

The visitor looked surprised, "Really? When did such a thing happen before? It's not in the *Torah*," he declared.

R' Yaakov Yosef explained with a twinkle in his eye. "Actually it is. When *Hashem* told Moshe, 'Come and I will send you to Pharaoh to bring My people out of Egypt,' Moshe answered, 'I am not a man of words.' However, after Moshe crossed the Red Sea, it is written; 'Then Moshe sang'. Thus, we see that we have a precedent even for this!"

The *Torah* tell us that there is a certain *mitzvah* that it is not across an ocean that you will have to traverse to get it. *Chazal* explain that if this *mitzvah* would demand such strenuous dedication, we would be required to do so.

Whatever that *mitzvah* is (*Torah* or *Teshuvah*), we learn from here how much dedication a person must exercise in his *avodas Hashem*. What a profound insight to ponder as we approach the great day of *Rosh Hashana*!



Fear of Judgment Brings a Good Judgment

וְהִתְבָּרֵךְ בִּלְבָבוֹ לֵאמֹר שָׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה־לִּי כִּי בִּשְׁרִרוּת לִבִּי אֵלֵךְ ***He will bless himself in his heart, saying, "Peace will be to me, when I do as I see fit."*** (*Devarim* 29:18)

The two *parshiyos* of *Nitzavim-Vayelech* are really one *parshah* that sometimes gets divided, so that *Nitzavim* will be read before Rosh Hashanah, as it contains a crucial message for us.

If a person hears all the terrible curses pronounced in *Ki Savo* upon he who fails to fulfil the Torah, and then "blesses" himself, saying in his heart, "It won't happen to me!" then it indeed will happen to him, and with a vengeance. The worst thing is to laugh off *Hashem's* punishments. That's what really brings bad upon a person, *chas v'shalom*.

The same applies to Rosh Hashanah. On this great Day of Judgment, life and death is decided for every individual. If a person is afraid of Divine judgment and cries out to *Hashem* for mercy, he will receive *Hashem's* mercy.

On this day we blow the *shofar*. The *shofar* arouses *Hashem's* mercy along these same lines. Our sounding below arouses a sounding Above as explained by the following metaphor.

A child came home one day from *yeshivah*, and before even he got home, his *rebbe* already called his parents to report how the child disturbed class, destroyed school property, and did several other very naughty things.

The child saw right away on his parents' faces that they knew everything. He ran to his bedroom to escape their wrath and the door slammed on his finger. He let out a terrible scream due to the piercing pain. His worried mother screamed in response as soon as she heard this and everyone rushed to calm down the poor child and comfort him.

All his misdeeds in school that day are forgotten. All the punishments that were waiting for him were cancelled. Not only that, but they bought him treats and toys so he will feel better.

That's how it is on Rosh Hashanah. When we stand in judgment, the *mitzvah* is to blow the *shofar,* because this expresses the great, profound cry of the Jewish people for Heaven's mercy. This arouses a cry of great compassion Above, from our Father in Heaven, and the terrible judgment just fades away as *chesed* takes its place.

That's why it is so important to know that we are standing before a terrifying judgment on Rosh Hashanah. There are so many unfortunate things that can happen to a person during the course of a year. And they are all being decided right now. We need to take it seriously, feel genuine fear, and cry out to *Hashem* for mercy. That cry for mercy is the piercing sound of the shofar. - If we do so, *Hashem* will immediately write and seal us for a good and sweet year.

"Do not fear the storms of life, for they are the winds that lift you higher. Every fall contains the seed of ascent, every struggle the seed of wisdom. From brokenness comes the deepest strength." ~ Rav Hutner.

"Greatness is born from the courage to rise after falling. Every fall is a step toward strength." ~ Rav Hutner.

Frum.org - Weekly Dvar Torah by Michael Winner



Face to Face

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם "***You are standing this day, before (lifnei) Hashem your G-d***" (Devarim 29:9).

The Kedushas Levi explains that the word "before" in Hebrew is **לִפְנֵי** which is also the same root to the word "face" and to the word "inner."

With this, we understand a little deeper the meaning of being "before Hashem."

There are two ways of standing in front of Hashem. You can either face Him or have your back to Him. When you are looking toward him, you are "face-to-face." You are showing that you want to make His will, your will. When we see photos of couples at their wedding, we never see them back-to-back, focusing on other things. We see them facing each other, being that they want to build a future together, willingly, without any third parties in the way.

"And recite before Me (**לִפְנֵי**) on Rosh HaShanah verses that mention Kingships, Remembrances, and Shofros: Kingships so that you will crown Me as King over you; Remembrances so that your remembrance will rise before Me for good; and with what will the remembrance rise? It will rise with the shofar" (Rosh Hashana 16a).

Throughout the year, we have a tendency to turn away from Hashem. It's called the Yetzer Horah. He's good at his job, and it's natural for us to fall into his traps. However, every year, we are given this special time, until Simchas Torah, to once again "face" Hashem. Not because we have no choice or out of fear, but rather because we have an inner desire to do so.

And when we turn toward Hashem, He turns toward us, and He becomes "Your G-d," your personal G-d, who shows the same commitment (if not more) to your relationship, as you do to Him.





Gedolim Be'Masayhem Stories & Anecdotes

Rav Yosef Babad Minchas Chinuch (Elul 24)

The sheer terror of the litigants before the Dayan Rav Yosef was very reluctant to preside over rabbinical court cases – based on the statement of Chazal (Yevamos 109b) that a dayan (rabbinic judge) should always imagine that Gehinnom is open underneath him.

Once, two litigants brought a case of safek gezel (questionable theft) before him. When Rav Yosef understood that the case was only about the possibility of inadvertent theft, and that the litigants simply wanted to distance themselves from even the suspicion of wrongdoing, he agreed to hear their case.

First, he wrapped himself in his tallis (Choshen Mishpat, siman 8:2) and then he removed his glasses. He explained to the two litigants that, based on Chazal, it is forbidden to gaze at the face of a rasha (Megillah 28a) and also that, when the litigants stand before a judge, the judge should consider them reshaim (Avos 1:8). Thus cloaked in his tallis, he turned to the litigants and, instead of calling them by name, he called out, "Reuven and Shimon!" (the customary names used by Torah sources in illustrative examples). "Reuven and Shimon, what is the dispute between you? What is your question of possible theft?"

The litigants, upon seeing Rav Yosef considering their case with such gravity and awe, were so terrified that they quickly forgave each

other for any inadvertent wrongdoing and fled in terror from his home!



Rav Yisroel Meir Hakohen Kagan - Chofetz Chaim, Mishna Berura (Elul 24)

In 1923, **the Chofetz Chaim zt"l** travelled to Vienna to participate in the Agudas Yisroel convention, and he spent some time together with **R' Avraham Mordechai Alter zt"l**, the Gerrer Rebbe. In the course of their discussion, the Chofetz Chaim cited the verse from Devorim 13:5 **אַחֲרֵי ה' אלקיכם תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֹתוֹ תִירָאוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו תִּשְׁמֹרוּ וּבְקֹלוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ וְאֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹדוּ וּבוֹ תִדְבָּקוּן**

"*Acharei ['after'] Hashem, your G-d, shall you follow and Him shall you fear; His commandments shall you observe and to His voice shall you hearken; Him shall you serve and to Him shall you cleave.*"

The Chofetz Chaim commented: "Our Sages observe that the Torah uses two words for 'after' - 'Acharei,' which means 'long after' (or 'far away') and 'achar,' which means 'soon after' (or 'close'). Why does our verse use 'acharei,' implying that one should follow Hashem from a distance? In fact, one should become as close to G-d as possible!"

He explained: Sometimes a person becomes depressed, and he feels that he is standing on the brink of a cliff as far from G-d as can be. He is confident that Hashem will not help him at this moment. One should know that such feelings are the work of the yetzer hora. Hashem is a Jew's "Father" at all times, and He accepts His children when they return to Him and saves them from all troubles. Even when one is "acharei," "far away," he should not despair of following Hashem.

This is the meaning of the words in the High Holiday prayers, "Fortunate is the man who will not forget You, and the human being who will find strength in You."

The Gerrer Rebbe responded: "Now I will try to interpret this verse in the manner of the Chassidim. - Specifically when a person feels distant from Hashem, that is when he can best follow Hashem, as it is written in Tehilim:'G-d is close to the broken-hearted'."



Hello, my friends. I saw a story that had a tremendous impact on me.

There was a story about a junior partner in a law firm, and he was part of his first big deal, and they had another branch of their law firm there, which is on the other side of town, and they were in the middle of this big negotiation. So he was asked to take some documents from their office to the other office. And this was his first big deal. He was very excited about it.

He was in the subway and thinking a lot about, you know, how excited he was he was involved in his very first big deal. And as he was going, he was walking in the subway and he passed by someone who was collecting money, someone who appeared to be a beggar. And he dropped a small donation there as he was walking by.

And then he hears the person calling behind him. He's saying, hey, mister, hey, mister. And he turns around and it's that person's running after him. He says, you forgot to take your pencil. So he said, 'oh, I didn't realize that you were a merchant'. And he took the pencils from him because obviously this person was selling pencils, and he went on his way.

As far as he knows, that's where the story ends, but it's not.

Years later, he's already much more established, and he's standing outside of a news stand, and it's a big stand, and he's selling lots of newspapers and drinks and all different things, and he's looking at one of the papers, and the person behind the news stand says to him, 'I know you.'

He said, 'where do you know me from? I don't think so.'

He says, 'no, no, I know you. You were the person that gave me a donation years ago and you called me a merchant because I was running after you. You didn't take the pencils. And then when you said that to me, I said to myself, 'I'm a merchant'. He called me a merchant. And then I decided, you know what? I don't have to just sell pencils. Merchants sell pens and merchants sell drinks. I started selling newspapers. And now actually I have newspaper stands all over the city. And it's all because of that one word you said to me. You called me a merchant.'

I want to give you a paper for free.

Now, what I took out of this story is it's amazing what one kind word can do to someone. Making them understand their abilities of what they're capable of can change someone's life if you say something nice. And that's something which we have to remember to utilize the כֹּחַ הַדִּבּוּר, our power of speech, to build others, to help others to become who they're capable of being. And when they do that, you can totally transform someone to someone who's struggling to someone who's thriving. Use your כֹּחַ הַדִּבּוּר to create other people's future.

Chofetz Chaim — "Every word a person speaks is written in Heaven, and every silence is also written. Fortunate is the one whose words bring merit, and whose silence brings peace. For both are weighed on the same scale."



The Smallest Piece From the Biggest Heart – Rabbo Shlomo Landau

If you're a parent, an educator or really just anyone that interacts with people, you need to take a minute and listen to this super powerful story.

It was a teacher's first year with a seventh grade class. It was just a few days before Rosh Hashanah, and one of the mothers who was an amazing baker sent in a beautiful cake for the class. During lunch the teacher began cutting slices for each of the students. There was one boy in the class who kept asking for the biggest piece. He followed the teacher around the room insisting again and again.

The more he pushed, the more frustrated the teacher became. Finally, wanting to teach the kid a lesson he wouldn't forget, the teacher handed him the smallest slice.

The boy walked away furious. For a few moments, he stood near the garbage can, staring at the cake in his hand as if maybe he just wanted to throw it out. Then he just quietly left the room.

The rest of the day got worse. He disrupted class after class, and the teacher got more and more angry.

At the end of the day, the teacher decided not to call his parents before Yom Tov. He remembered the exhausted look in their eyes at orientation, like the look of parents who'd spent years receiving difficult phone calls about their son.

At the end of the school day, as the teacher walked out of the school building, the school security guard stopped him. "Who was that sweet boy who brought me that piece of cake that you sent me?" He asked.

The teacher froze. The guard smiled. 'The boy apologized that there was only a small piece left, but it was so sweet of you to think about me.'

Suddenly, everything changed. After Yom Tov, the teacher asked the boy why he hadn't explained himself.

"You wouldn't have believed me", he answered quietly.

"But why did you tell him the cake was from me?" The teacher said.

"Because I didn't want him to know that I had given him my piece."

That year the teacher learned a lesson that he would never forget. Sometimes the children who demand the most are quietly giving away the most, and sometimes hidden beneath the thorns is an extraordinarily beautiful soul.



For one young couple that grew up in Bnei Brak, their hope, their dream had always been to find an apartment in Bnei Brak and to continue living there where they'd lived their entire lives.

When it came time to purchase an apartment, everything was so expensive, cost-prohibitive. They just couldn't figure out an apartment that could work for them. In conversation with their realtor, the realtor suggested an apartment on Rechov Jabotinsky, which is literally at the mouth of Gush Dan.

It's not in Bnei Brak itself, it's kind of on the outskirts. But hey, at least it's close. So they went to check it out. The apartment itself was nice: three bedrooms, nice dining room, living room, a decent

kitchen, excellent. The problem was that the front window off the dining room opened onto Rechov Jabotinsky, where there was non-stop traffic 24/7. And they weren't sure if they wanted that to be the backdrop of their family Shabbos seuda. In the end, they decided to go for it. And the apartment was decorated beautifully, and it was tasteful and they even put up a thick purple curtain with flowers on it that they would close each week to block out the traffic on Shabbos and enjoy Shabbos, a little cocoon of holiness in a world gone crazy.

And thus, that's how they lived their life. The husband would come home from shul, they'd close the curtains, the kids would sit around the table, and this particular family was so gifted: the children, the husband, they would sing zemiros that were other-worldly. One week, in the middle of the Shabbos seuda, they're in the middle of singing zemiros, all of a sudden the air conditioning goes on the fritz and then it blows a fuse and it's absolute dark besides for the Shabbos candles. It started getting hot so they opened up the purple curtain.

And now they were exposed to Rechov Jabotinsky. The wife looked at her husband, she looked at her children and she says, "Keep singing. Keep singing. Let's bring Shabbos out there." And they did.

And they sang with renewed vigor and with intensity that perhaps they'd never sang with before. Just a few minutes later there's a knock at the front door. Standing at the front door is a young man and somewhat embarrassed he says, "I heard the singing from downstairs. Is it okay if I join you?" And they said, "Sure." He sits down at the table, they start singing songs, zemiros, and the fellow starts singing with them and every once in a while they notice that he's dabbing at the corner of his eye, he's crying.

And they don't know what's happening. At the end of the meal he turns to them and he says, "I need to tell you a little bit about myself. Up to ten years ago I kept Shabbos. I was part of a beautiful

Shabbos-observant family and then stuff happened. I haven't been at a Shabbos table in ten years. I was standing downstairs waiting for a taxi and all of a sudden I heard this beautiful singing and it brought me back to a period of my life that I was longing for. It was almost like magnetically I was drawn. I had to be part of it.

And here I am singing with you. Thank you so much for restoring in me a part of myself that I wasn't even sure existed."

And eventually they said gut Shabbos to him, and he walked off into the night.

A few weeks later there was a knock at their door and standing at the door is an elderly gentleman and he says, "Can I come in?" and they say, "Sure." He says, "You know a few weeks ago a young man came here and he sang zemiros with you?"

"Yeah, who are you?"

He says, "Well, that was my son. We hadn't seen our son for ten years. But the next erev Shabbos, the next Friday, there was a knock at our door and he was there. He says, 'I'm back. I want to be part of Shabbos. - Thank you for bringing our son back to us.'"

You know on some level all week we're so busy living that sometimes we forget about who we are. We forget about our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, maybe not intentionally, it's just stuff. But Shabbos, Shabbos, that's the day of the week that we need to remember who we are, who we really are.

And you can imagine how Hakadosh Baruch Hu was waiting. He's waiting for us to come home that Shabbos. Shabbos is coming home. And if we keep Shabbos properly and we appreciate it, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Ah, my child, so great to have you back home. - **מה נעים שבת קודש**

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Eliyahu Hatishbi

Why is Eliyahu Hanavi called "Eliyahu Hatishbi"? (Melachim I, 17:1). Rashi and Radak explain that he came from a place called Toshav.

The Sefer Haminhagim offers a deeper interpretation:

The term "Tishbi" is related to *toshav*—a resident. The rest of the world are merely *gerim*, sojourners, as we live here only temporarily before passing on. Eliyahu, however, did not die and remains alive; in that sense, he is a true *toshav*, a permanent resident. - Therefore, he is called "Hatishbi."

Harav Moshe Wolfson - A 'City of Refuge'



There is the famous allusion to the month of **אלול** - Elul in the initial letters of Ani l'Dodi v'Dodi li (I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.)

There is another allusion taught by the **Arizal** (cited in Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:1) When the Torah discusses the laws of ***ir miklat***, the city of refuge, to which an unintentional murderer flees, it uses the words וְהָאֱלֹקִים אִנָּה לְיָדוֹ וְשַׂמְתִּי לְךָ מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׁמָּה '***but Hashem brought [it] about into his [the murderer's] hand, I [Hashem] will make a place for you to which he shall flee***.' (Shemos 21:13)

The initial letters of the words אִנָּה לְיָדוֹ וְשַׂמְתִּי לְךָ spell **אלול**.

The Arizal is teaching us that Elul and Aseres Yemei Teshuvah that follow, are 'Cities of Refuge' to which one can flee from the yetzer hora and return to Hashem with a full heart.

How do we '*seek refuge*' in Elul? Through increased Torah study and by learning works of mussar that will lead to increased yiras Shamayim. We engage in teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah.

The literal translation of teshuvah is 'return'. We return our spiritual roots by bringing our neshamos back to their original state of purity and reuniting ourselves with the Ribbono Shel Olam.





Rabbi Yerachmiel Cofnas Zt'l

This year ('06) marks seventy-two years since the petirah of the holy **Chofetz Chaim זכר צדיק לברכה**, which falls today. I remember it well. The Chofetz Chaim was niftar on a Friday afternoon, shortly before the Sunday of the first Selichos. There was still enough time to arrange the kevurah on Friday, but a serious shailah arose. If the levayah took place immediately, very few people would be able to attend. Because of the great kavod due to the Chofetz Chaim, they contacted **Reb Chaim Ozer** and asked him whether the levayah should be held at once or postponed until Sunday.

Reb Chaim Ozer ruled that, in honor of the Chofetz Chaim, the levayah should be postponed until Sunday. In those days there were no mobile phones and very few people even had telephones. Telegrams were sent to rabbanim throughout the region informing

them that the Chofetz Chaim had been niftar and that the levayah would take place on Sunday morning.

At the time, I was in Ostryn, some forty or fifty miles from Radin. I travelled through the night by horse and cart. We hardly slept, and by morning we arrived in Radin, where preparations were being made for the levayah of the saintly Chofetz Chaim.

It was related that shortly before his passing, when he was already in a state of **גוסס**, he appeared to be in a coma. Many bochurim were gathered around him saying Tehillim and davening for his recovery. While he remained in that state, some of the bochurim went out to daven Minchah with a minyan.

Then the Chofetz Chaim suddenly opened his eyes and looked around. This story was transmitted orally by those who were present. He saw that only a few bochurim remained in the room. When they explained that the others had gone to daven Minchah, he remarked:

"Is this a time to look for mitzvos?"

Of course, more than a minyan had remained behind, but his meaning was clear. He knew that his departure from this world was near, and he was expressing wonder that people would leave at such a moment in order to pursue another mitzvah.

About two hours later, he returned his neshamah to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Although more than seventy years have passed, the Chofetz Chaim's name continues to grow in prominence. His greatness becomes more widely recognized with each passing day. Not only his personal greatness, but also his mission to strengthen the observance of Torah, especially in the area of **לשון הרע** and **רכילות**.

The Chofetz Chaim was deeply concerned about the suffering caused by improper speech. In his sefer **שמירת הלשון**, he explains at length how careful a person must be to avoid speaking negatively about others and the immense damage that such speech can cause.

When the Chofetz Chaim first began speaking and writing about this subject, people scarcely appreciated the severity of **לשון הרע**. It was not a topic that received much attention. But as his seforim spread and were studied, awareness increased dramatically. Organizations were established to promote these teachings, such as Machsom L'Fi in America, dedicated to strengthening vigilance in speech.

Today, Baruch Hashem, millions of people are aware of the dangers of **לשון הרע** and of the seriousness of this issur. Many strive to fulfill the mitzvah of speaking positively and avoiding harmful speech.

The Chofetz Chaim explained the pasuk: **ואיש את קדשיו לו יהיה**

When a person's allotted time in this world comes to an end, everything remains behind. Only the neshamah returns to Olam HaBa. The only possessions a person truly takes along are his mitzvos and maasim tovim. Everything else is left here. Wealth, possessions, and accomplishments cannot be taken along. However, if a person uses what he has for Torah, tzedakah, and supporting worthy causes, then those resources become eternal assets and accompany him into the World to Come.

The world says:

"**אַלע נאַראָנים זענען קלוג פַאַר זיך**" — ***all foolish people are clever for themselves.***

The Chofetz Chaim would say: "***And I say that many clever people are foolish for themselves***." They fail to take advantage of the opportunities granted to them in this world. They expend tremendous effort and resources on things of little lasting value while neglecting that which benefits the neshamah eternally.

A person must understand that Olam HaZeh is merely a preparation for Olam HaBa. HaKadosh Baruch Hu placed us in this world in order to provide us with opportunities to earn eternal reward through Torah, mitzvos, and good deeds.

Of course, Chazal teach that one should perform mitzvos **שלא על מנת לקבל פרס** — not for the sake of reward. A mitzvah should be performed because it is the command of the Ribbono Shel Olam. We were created to fulfill His will. Nevertheless, we must recognize that every mitzvah and every good deed contributes to our eternal existence.

There are countless stories about the greatness of the Chofetz Chaim, his righteousness, his saintliness, and his genius.

Reb Chaim Ozer once remarked that while the Chofetz Chaim was universally known as a tzaddik, many people did not fully appreciate his extraordinary greatness in Torah.

As the Mishnah Berurah became the standard halachic work used throughout the Torah world—in yeshivos, kollelim, and by talmidei chachamim everywhere—the world increasingly came to recognize the immense Torah scholarship of the Chofetz Chaim. - His gaonus was extraordinary.

The Chofetz Chaim once commented that he had written the Mishnah Berurah only on Orach Chaim. He would have liked to produce similar works on Yoreh Deah and Choshen Mishpat as well, and he felt capable of doing so, but simply did not have enough time.

His greatness was truly phenomenal.

Whenever the yahrtzeit of the Chofetz Chaim arrives, each of us should reflect upon his greatness and strive to implement his teachings. He left Klal Yisrael an extraordinary yerushah: seforim for every Jew, whether scholar or layman, young or old, even special works for soldiers. - Everything he wrote was accompanied by remarkable siyata diShmaya.

When one studies his writings on **לשון הרע**, one is struck by how accurately he understood human nature. He describes situations in shul, conversations among friends, and the way gossip spreads from

one person to another. How did he know so precisely the countless tactics of the yetzer hara in matters of speech?

Gedolim explained that this was a manifestation of his tremendous siyata diShmaya. Heaven granted him unique insight into the weaknesses of human nature so that he could guide Klal Yisrael and provide the remedies through his seforim.

Through his efforts, the entire Jewish world has been elevated. We are far better off today than we were before the era of the Chofetz Chaim.

We must remember the immeasurable gifts he bestowed upon Klal Yisrael. We should study his seforim diligently, strive to fulfill their teachings, and continue the work that he began.

In his merit, may we be zocheh to witness the coming of the Goel Tzedek and the Geulah Sheleimah for all of Klal Yisrael. Amen.





The **גמרא** says in **יומא** that when you do **תשובה** out of love, the sin becomes a **מצוה**. So the **מהרשא** is very startled by it. How can sins become **מצוות**? They can't. So the **רבי** once explained, based on a **תניא**, every **מצוה** has a **הכשר מצוה**.

There's no **מצוה** that doesn't require preparation. You can't just shake a **לולב**. You need to harvest a **לולב**, you need to harvest an **אתרוג**. You can't just blow **שופר**. You need to detach a horn from the ram and you have to hollow it out. You can't just sit in a **סוכה**, you have to build a **סוכה**, you have to get lumber.

There's one more **מצוה** called **תשובה**. What's the preparation for **תשובה**? What do you need before **תשובה**? Sin.

The problem is, if I would sin in order to prepare for **תשובה**, I wouldn't sin, right? If I were thinking about G-d and I'm trying to prepare a **מצוה**, I'm trying to build my **סוכה**, then I wouldn't sin. So

when I'm sinning, I couldn't care less about **הכשר מצוה**. When I do **תשובה** out of love—and the **תשובה** out of love the **תניא** says means that through the **תשובה**, through the crisis, through the failure, through the mistakes, through the darkness, you experience a much deeper relationship. It's much more authentic because you tasted the other side. - The yearning is deeper, the love is deeper.

So now what happens? It turns out that retroactively, the sin was a **הכשר מצוה** for **תשובה**. You could have never reached this place without the **עבירה**. So retroactively, what happens to the sin? It's a **הכשר מצוה**. - It becomes a **מצוה**.



I want to share a truly remarkable story. There was a seminary that traveled to spend *Shabbos* in *Tzfat* as is common with many of the seminaries. On Friday night, they took the girls to a very large *shul* which had a big *Ezras Nashim*, a big women's gallery so the girls could be there for *Kabbalas Shabbos* and for *Maariv*. One of the heads of the seminary was there with her children, and she brought her little four-year-old upstairs to the *Ezras Nashim*.

He's usually a very calm and relaxed kid, but for some reason, he was very hyper. And in a moment of hyperactivity, he knocked his mother's leather *siddur* off of the ledge in the *Ezras Nashim* and the *siddur* fell down into the men's *shul*. They were a little bit nervous, hopefully no one got hurt, but they didn't hear much going on downstairs. At the end of *davening*, the head of the seminary sent somebody into the *shul* to retrieve her *siddur*.

And a minute or two later, a fellow comes out there, he's got long hair, his *yarmulke* is barely perched on his head. And he says, "This *siddur zeh shayach lach*, it's yours?" She says, "Yes, what's going on here?" He says, "I need to tell you something remarkable." He said, "I was driving in my car and I was listening to the radio, and it must have been one of these *dati* radio shows, one of these religious radio shows, and the Rabbi that was speaking said that every Jew has to go to *shul* at least once a week, a Jew has to have a connection with a *Beis Knesset*. I hadn't been in *shul*, I hadn't been in *Beis Knesset* in years. And I said to myself, the Rabbi's right, let me try it out.

So tonight, I showed up at this random *shul*. I walked in, *davening* had already started, and there were no *siddurim* left on the shelf. I found a seat, but I felt very awkward. I didn't have a *siddur*, and no one really noticed me.

And at some point, I said, I'm leaving. But G-d, if you really want me to stay, get me a *siddur* somehow. He said, within a minute, all of a sudden, a *siddur* falls from heaven and it lands on my lap. He said, I felt like G-d was answering my prayers and he was like, my son, I want you here.

And if all it takes is to get you a *siddur*, I could even have one fall from heaven. An amazing story. This child is usually very calm and tranquil. What are the chances that he would knock off a *siddur* and that the *siddur* would fall directly into the lap of the person that had just asked *Hashem* for that *siddur*?

When a Jewish person turns to *Hashem* in a moment of authenticity and a very real moment, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is waiting to fulfill their request.



Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn – Enhancing Your "Dash" - Making Life Meaningful (5768)



The last year and a half has been very, very difficult for me personally. And the reason that it's been difficult, those of you who know me know that I had a very, very close relationship with my mother ע״ה. She was an almana literally for 40 long years.

When I was 21, my mother lost her husband, and I lost my father and it happened on Shmini Atzeres. And my mother really never got over it.

She just simply never got over that loss, she never remarried, and nobody, I'm not blaming her and nobody's blaming anyone, it was just that type of relationship that just could never, never be replaced.

And my mother and I raised the other younger, I'm the oldest of seven, so one sister was married, but the others my mother and I walked them all down together. And there was nothing that my mother and I could not talk about.

Actually she was the one who taught me writing and all through the writing came all the stories and through the stories came the speaking, so I owe her, עַד אֵין שִׁעוּר.

So there's nothing that we couldn't talk about. We had a very open relationship. But anyway, we lived literally two blocks away and my wife was literally like a daughter to her. So we could talk to my mother about anything except one thing: her age. I could never talk to her about her age.

Now for example I would say, 'Ma you know people your age…'

– 'Stop don't talk to me about my age.'

She wouldn't even tell me her birthday I guess she figured out that maybe I'll count how many birthdays she had. So I could never talk about that. But otherwise everything was in the open.

And she was nifter before Shmini Atzeret and we sat shiva right after Yom Tov. But over Yom Tov during a Simchas Torah I went to one of the local Rosh Yeshivas Rabbi Zelig Epstein zol gezunt zain and I said to him, "I know that when people come to be menachem avel that they ask you many many silly questions."

And some of the questions that they ask that have no meaning whatsoever… 'Did she suffer- How long was she sick?'

Who cares, that's not what a person's all about.

But then people always ask, 'How old was she? How old was she? - As if it makes a difference.

But you know, I didn't want to say first of all I never asked her and second of all what am I going to say, - it's not your business and you know my mother didn't want anybody to know. So even if I did know what was I going to do?

So I said to the Rosh Yeshiva what should I say? Am I allowed to answer that question, because I know my mother didn't want anybody to talk about her age?

He said, 'Now you can say already.'

So I said, 'Really, I'll do whatever you tell me but like why?'

'There's only ayin hara while she was alive - she didn't want ayin hara so that's why she didn't want to talk about her age. But now afterwards, it's not a problem.'

You know it was very hard for me to say the age because I knew she wouldn't like it even though the Rosh Yeshiva said that I could say. So this what I decided.

So the first couple days that people came so I said to them listen you know my mother I believe was born in 1919 and if you want to figure out if it really means that much to you, you do the math. I never did the math because I know she didn't want it. So you figure it out.

And that's what I said for you know literally the third person that came in and I was counting I wanted to see how long it's going to take.

The third person that came in already asked the age and of course you know the first day everybody was asking already. And then finally I get a call from my cousin in Eretz Yisrael he says what are you talking about?

I heard you telling everybody your mother was born in 1919 you know that's not true.

I said why?

I really believe it's true.

He says no, what are you talking about?

He says his father has the records that his father was younger than your mother. He was born in 1919 so your mother was born before that.

So you know now I mamesh didn't know what to say.

I said, listen, it makes no difference really what, you know, what age she was. The main thing is what she did with her '***dash***'.

He said, 'the what?'

I said, '***the dash***', that's the most important thing, what she did with.

And they're looking at me, what are you talking about?

And I said, listen, you know, on a goishe monument anyway, when a person dies, they write the person lived from 1900 dash 1975, right?

Right?

So that's the main thing, like what's the difference how old the person is, right? The main thing is what they did with their lives.

And this is not really my expression. There's a secular poem that somebody wrote, nobody seems to know who wrote the poem, and I'll just read you two paragraphs of this unbelievable poem which will be our topic.

'It matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash.

What matters is how we live and act and how we spend our dash.'

So when your eulogy or your hesped is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of what is said about how you spend your dash?

And that's what I came to talk about. Every one of us has a dash. Every one of us has a certain amount of years that we live. And I'll tell you a great story that happened by **Sfas Emes's** levaya.

The Sfas Emes lived till the age of 58. So by the levaya, the **Imrei Emes** was talking to his own brother Reb **Moshe Bezalel Alter**. And he said to Reb Bezalel, at least our father had arichas yamim.

He said, arichas yamim? What are you talking about? He lived till only 58.

He said, I didn't say that he had arichas shonim. I said that he had arichas yamim. - There's a great difference between arichas shonim, length of years, and length of days.

No one, no one in this room, nobody listening on the tape, on anything, can guarantee for themselves arichas shonim. Nobody knows what tomorrow brings. But every single one of us can guarantee in our lives arichas yamim. Length of days, that means every day is accomplished.

That's what the Imrei Emes meant about his father. His father had arichas yamim because every day was special, every day was accounted for, every day was accomplishing something.

That's all the Ribono Shel Olam wants from us, is that we should make sure that we have arichas yamim. Arichas shonim is His job, not ours. We can try to do whatever you can, but there's no guarantee. But arichas yamim is in our hands.

And that's what I want to talk about.

How can we make sure that in our lives that we're zoche to have arichas yamim?

And I think the first lesson that we must learn is a gevaldike lesson from the **Ponovezher Rov**.

The Ponovezher Rov asked a very interesting kasha.

It says in **תהלים** 144:7. **שְׁלַח יָדֶיךָ מִמָּרוֹם פְּצֵנִי וְהַצִּילֵנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים מִיַּד בְּנֵי נֵכָר** - Dovid HaMelech says, Ribono Shel Olam, send Your hands from above. Save me from the stormy waters from the goyim.

So the goyim are called waters, stormy waters.

So the Ponovezher Rov says, but in **עובדיה** 1:18 it says, **והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה**. Beis Yaakov, Yankev is a fire. Yosef is a flame. Yidden are a fire.

So what happens when water and fire get together? The water puts out the fire.

So the Ponovezher Rov asks, is that the future of Klal Yisroel? That the water is going to put out the fire and the goyim are going to get rid chas veshalom of the Yidden?

זאגט דער הייליגער פאנעוועזשער רב a tremendous teretz.

When does the water put out the fire? That's only when they touch each other. But what if you have a mechitzah between? You have a pot in between?

Oh, you have a pot in between, then the fire controls the water. When that pot has a fire underneath but there's a mechitzah between the fire and the water, then the water is controlled by the fire. - How hot and how cold the water is going to be. And if you keep the fire there long enough, it'll dissipate all the water.

And that's the first thing that we have to know. That no matter where we live, in Manchester, in Monroe, in Flatbush, in Boro Park, we're in galus. And we have to know that we have to be different than the goyim of the world. We can't think like them, we can't talk like them, we can't play music like them, we can't dance like them, we can't act like them, and we can't watch what they watch.

And when a person realizes that he has that difference and he makes that mechitzah, as my mother aleha hashalom called it the ghetto of the mind, and you make that mechitzah, that's the first way of accomplishing as a Yid.

I want to share with you a story that I told the women last night, and this is something that moved me and shook me to the core.

Over the last number of years, I've had the opportunity to go to Eastern Europe and take literally hundreds of people to different places, to Vilna, Kelm, Radin, Telshe, Slabodka, all these places.

And then in other years we went to Worms, the Beis Medrash where Rashi was, in Frankfurt, by the kever of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

And two years ago the fellow who organizes the tour, he said, you know, I want to go to Hungary.

I've never been to Hungary. Let's go together, we'll take everybody together.

So before I go I have to do a lot of research, and of course I did the research and I met a fellow, Avrom Schonberger in Boro Park. And he told me something very interesting.

He said, you know, I was a little boy, he said, in the early 1940s when the Nazis came. And he was describing what it was, the shreckleche police work that they did and how they beat Yidden, how they killed Yidden. But I want to tell you what happened along the Danube River.

He says, along the Danube River, the river separates two cities, Buda on one side, Pest on the other side. Today it's all one city, Budapest.

He says, but along the Danube River they lined up Yidden and they shot them into the water and they killed them. And afterwards I read that they would take three Yidden, they'd tie them together and they only shot the middle one. And the middle one, the fact that he was tied to the other two, he would drag the others into the water and they would drown.

Except there was one of the great goyim that lived in those days, Raoul Wallenberg, many have heard his name. He was on the other side and he hired divers that would jump into the water and they would go to where these guys were still struggling for life, those guys that were still alive, and they would cut the cords and through Raoul Wallenberg many of those lives were saved.

So I knew that I'm going to take the people to the Danube River and we're going to say Tehillim and we're going to daven there because there Yidden died because they were Kedoshim, they died only and they were killed only because they were Yidden.

About a week and a half before the trip, my mechutan from Los Angeles calls me. His name is Alex Kramer. And he calls me, he says, you know, Paysach, I want to go with you on the trip, but I can't because I'm a Kohen and you go to all the kvarim, the Chasam Sofer and the Shach and all those and the Pnei Yehoshua, I can't go with you. But the last day of the trip you're going to be in Budapest, I'll meet you in Budapest.

I said, Alex, you're going to schlep from Los Angeles all the way to Budapest for a day and a half? It's not kedai.

He said, no, I was born there. And I still have relatives there. I haven't seen them in years. I'll meet you the last day and then I'll stay a little longer and get to know my relatives again.

I said, okay, fine. Good.

The last day of the trip, I come into the beautiful hotel in Budapest, there in their lobby is sitting Alex and his wife Sheina. And we sit down to eat in the evening and as we're sitting and talking, he says to me, do you know what happened along the Danube River?

I said, what?

Of course I know. I did my research, I plan to take everybody there tomorrow morning rather.

He says, well I was there today.

I said, really?

He said, I want to show you something. They made a memorial. They made a very special memorial for the Yidden that were killed there. He says, I want to show it to you.

He's a phenomenal photographer and he takes out his digital camera and he starts showing me - on screen after screen after screen and my mouth drops open. Because all along the Danube River on the boardwalk is a whole row of empty shoes. Just plain shoes. Shoes of children, shoes of parents, and shoes of grandchildren.

And when you see the shoes of the little children, you mamish can't talk. And I get the chills even now thinking about it.

And then he says, I want to tell you something I never told you. He says, my mother was on that line!

I said, what are you talking about?

He says, it was before I was born. My mother was holding my oldest sister and she was about to be shot, they had the guns ready, and then Wallenberg came down and he had ten visas. And the Germans

yemach shemam were very pünktlich. And they said, you've got ten visas, you can take off any ten people you want.

And he went up and down and he looked for the youngest women with the youngest children. And he took off my mother and my oldest sister.



I said, Alex, we're going to go there tomorrow. I'm going to tell everyone what happened, but I'm not going to tell them about this memorial. I want them to be awed just like I was at the first sight of it and I want everybody to hear that story about you and your mother.

So the next day we come, and I take everyone, I tell everyone at breakfast what happened along the Danube River. And then we all come and as people are getting off the bus and they see the shoes, especially the shoes of the children and people cannot believe it. And people are crying and holding on to each other because it's so shocking and it's so simple and it's so poignant.

And we started saying Tehillim **על נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם בכינו בזכרנו את ציון** it was an unbelievable ma'amad.

And then I tell everybody to take a look, it looks like blue water in the Danube River it's not blue, it's filled with red Yiddishe blood!

That ma'amad, that the singing and the Tehillim over there was just incredible. It was the most ultimate way to end that trip.

I come back to New York and I'm talking about the trip wherever I go and especially about the shoes.

And before Rosh Hashanah the rav in my shul comes over to me and he says I need you to do me a favor, I need you to make the appeal on Yizkor on Yom Kippur.

I said okay fine. I do it every year in shul so it was no different.

In Yizkor before Yizkor on Yom Kippur I got up and I said to everyone I want you to know something stunning happened in our shul Rosh Hashanah.

And everybody's look what happened Rosh Hashanah? We were all here what happened?

And I say I'm telling you not only it happened the first day it happened the second day.

And everybody's wondering what happened?

Then I told them the story about the Danube River.

Then I told them the first day Rosh Hashanah I davened near the front of the shul like you know second row. I said had my tallis over my head, it was Birkhas Kohanim and after duchaning I took the tallis off my head and I took a look by the Aron Kodesh.

I saw a whole row of empty shoes! Shoes of grandparents, shoes of parents and shoes of little children.

I couldn't look at it I had to cover my eyes. I couldn't look at those shoes. And the next day already I was waiting for it.

And I took a look at those shoes and I was thinking what's the difference between these shoes that we all see every Yom Tov after Birkhas Kohanim and those empty shoes along the Danube River?

And the answer of course is that in a few minutes lebedigeh people, lebedigeh mentchen would be able to fill these shoes and they'll be able to mekadesh shem shamayim. To be able to go do chesed, they could go learn Torah, they could go to a minyan and daven.

But those shoes remain empty. And that's the reason that we are all in this world to fill those shoes because those shoes remain empty forever.

Whichever concentration camp you go, you go to Auschwitz, you go to Majdanek, they have a room, a room filled with thousands of shoes.

Why shoes? What do shoes represent?

Shoes represent the mahalach. A person is not an omeid. A person is a mahalach and he goes and he has to go higher and higher every single day. He has to make his life meaningful.

How do you make your life meaningful?

By making a kiddush shem shamayim. The ikker kiddush Hashem is **ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל**. The ikker kiddush Hashem is when you inspire another Yid. - That's kiddush shem shamayim.

When you act in such a way you daven with your child together. You learn with your child by Avos U'bonim and somebody sees **אזוי דארף א ייד זיך פירן**. And then a person says that's how I want to be.

That's the greatest kiddush shem shamayim.

That's how you enhance your dash!

מיר זאלן אלע זוכה זיין צו אריכת ימים ואריכת שנים and kumen tzu Moshiach.

Tzedakah Saved His Life By Rabbi David Shelby

Rabbi David Shelby shared a remarkable story about hashgachah pratis, the power of tzedakah, and how sometimes a message doesn't make sense until years later.

A rabbi once arrived at his yeshivah and noticed something unusual in the parking lot. A motorcycle. That alone caught his attention.

Motorcycles were not exactly common among yeshivah students. Still, he didn't think much of it. He went inside, taught his classes, met with students, and continued with his day.

Later that evening, as he was leaving the yeshivah, he noticed the motorcycle again. This time, however, he saw a figure climbing onto it. The rabbi walked closer. To his surprise, he recognized the rider immediately. It was a former student who had graduated more than six years earlier.

The rabbi's face lit up. He walked over, embraced him warmly, and began catching up. "It's so good to see you!" "Where have you been all these years?"

The young man smiled. "I moved out of town." "I've been living in Boston." "But I recently came back, and the first place I wanted to visit was the yeshivah." "I missed the rebbeim.""I missed the boys." "I wanted to learn a little." Then he added: "And I also came to give the ma'aser that I owe."

The rabbi was surprised. "The ma'aser?"

The young man nodded. "For the past six years." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a checkbook, and wrote a generous check to the yeshivah. After a few more minutes of conversation, they said goodbye. The young man climbed onto his motorcycle and rode off into the night. The rabbi returned to his routine.

A few days later, however, he received a phone call. The caller identified himself as a rabbi from a hospital. "Rabbi," he said, "a few nights ago, one of your former students came to visit you at the yeshivah."

"The one with the motorcycle." The rabbi immediately became concerned. "Is everything okay?"

The caller paused. "Baruch Hashem, everything will be okay." Then he explained. The young man had been involved in a horrific motorcycle accident. A devastating crash. One that should have

ended very differently. The hospital rabbi told him: "You have no idea how miraculous it is that he's alive."

"He specifically asked for you." "He wants you to come visit him." The rabbi immediately got into his car and drove to the hospital. When he arrived, he found his former student lying in bed, wrapped in bandages.

The young man smiled when he saw his rebbi. "Rabbi," he said, "you have no idea what happened." "The accident was terrible." "The fact that I'm alive is the biggest miracle."

As they spoke, a police officer entered the room carrying a twisted piece of metal. It looked like crumpled aluminum foil. The officer held it up and jokingly said: "This guy must know people upstairs."

The rabbi looked at the mangled metal. "What is that?"

The officer replied: "It's part of his motorcycle." "It landed nearly fifty feet from the crash site." The damage was unbelievable. The officer shook his head and walked out.

The room became quiet. Then the young man turned to his rebbi and asked: "Rabbi, do you know why I'm here?" The rabbi answered: "Because Hashem performed a miracle."

The student nodded. "Yes."

"But do you know why Hashem performed a miracle?" The rabbi remained silent.

The young man continued. "What was the last thing I did before I left the yeshivah that night?" The rabbi thought for a moment. "You wrote a check." "You gave your ma'aser."

The young man nodded. "Exactly." "That's what saved my life." The rabbi listened carefully.

The student continued: "Tzedakah tatzil mimaves." "Tzedakah saves a person from death." Then he said something that stunned the

rabbi. "Rabbi, that accident also answered a question I've had for six years."

The rabbi looked confused. "What question?"

The young man explained.

"When I graduated from high school, the yeshivah published a yearbook." "Under every student's picture, there was a pasuk." "The rebbeim carefully chose a pasuk that reflected each student's personality."

The rabbi nodded. He remembered.

The student continued. "I used to collect tzedakah in the yeshivah before Minchah.""So under my picture, the pasuk that was chosen for me was: 'Tzedakah tatzil mimaves.' 'Tzedakah saves from death.'"

The student smiled. "For six years I wondered about that." "There are so many pesukim about tzedakah." "So many beautiful verses." "Why that one?" "Why was that the pasuk chosen for me?"

He paused. Then he looked directly at his rebbi. "Now I know." "The answer came six years later."

The room fell silent. Sometimes Hashem plants a message in a person's life long before he understands it. Sometimes a pasuk, a lesson, or a moment seems insignificant at the time. And sometimes years later, the meaning suddenly becomes crystal clear.

The young man recovered. The miracle became part of his life story. And whenever he thought about that pasuk beneath his yearbook picture, he remembered the lesson forever. "Tzedakah tatzil mimaves." Tzedakah saves. Sometimes in ways we can see. And sometimes in ways only Hashem can.

תורה תבלין

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף וכו' (לא-יב)

Rashi quotes the famous gemara (חגיגה ג) that the Torah commanded every member of Bnei Yisroel to be present by the mitzvah of Hakhel: the men came to study, the women came to listen and the children were there so that those who brought them will be rewarded. At first, this seems difficult to understand. Young children can be noisy and disruptive, and they would probably prevent their parents from being able to listen closely and concentrate properly on the mitzvah. Why then must the parents go through the trouble of bringing their little ones to Yerushalayim? Wouldn't it have been better to leave them at home so their parents could fulfill the mitzvah undisturbed?

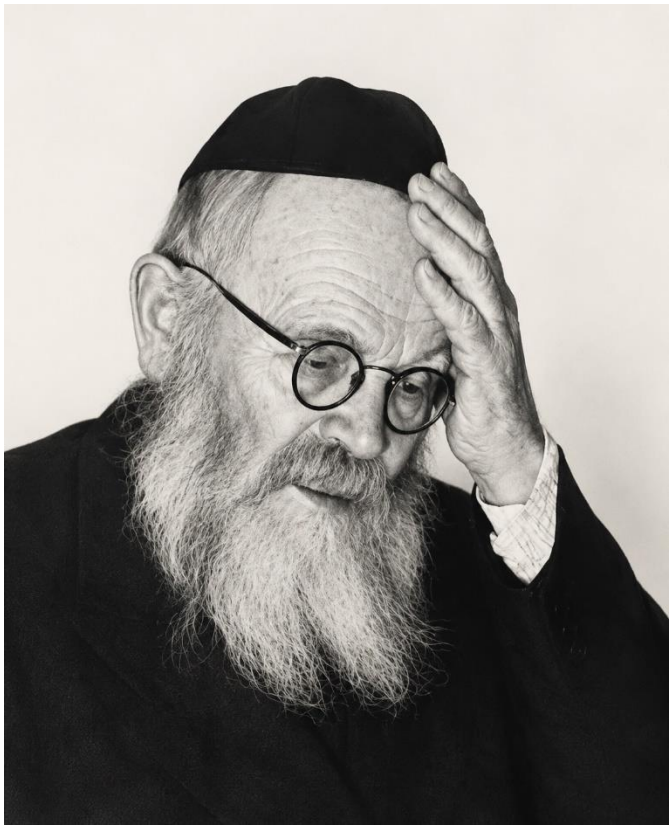
R' Nosson Adler ZT"L explains that on the contrary, it is absolutely necessary to bring the young children, even those who do not understand and may possibly cause a disturbance. The reward that the Torah promises for bringing the children to Hakhel, was greater than any loss of concentration or difficulty it entailed. Because when a child, especially a young child, is placed in an atmosphere of holiness, it creates in that child an everlasting impression in his young heart and brings him closer to Hashem. The value of such an experience is incalculable.

"Never underestimate what people can survive when they stop fighting with each other and start fighting for each other. Bricks alone are fragile, but together they build cities. Unity turns weakness into strength, creating a foundation strong enough to support what cannot be carried alone."

~ Inspired by the teachings of Chizkiya the son of Reb Chiya (Medrash Tanchuma, Nitzavim)

The Weekly Vort

Rav Elya Lopian - *The yahrzeit of R' Eliyaha ben R' Yakov Lopian zt"l, is on 20 Elul (1970). May his merit protect us.*



◣ On a hot, dry day in Elul 5730 (1970)—a vast sea of mourners gathered for the *levayah* of R' Elya Lopian. The crowd stood in rapt silence as the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, R' Chaim Shmuelevitz, rose to deliver a *hesped*. Despite the immense throng, the stillness was broken only by muffled sobs. R' Chaim declared, "There is no obligation upon us to deliver a proper *hesped*, for none of us could portray his greatness to this generation. R' Elya was a genuine *tzaddik*, one of the rare individuals upon whom the existence of the world depends."

Yet he felt compelled to share one personal note: eight years earlier he had been gravely ill, and the one who saved his life was R' Elya. "I cannot reveal the details publicly," he said, "but I know with certainty that my recovery was in his merit. From that day until today, I never properly thanked him." Standing before the crowd, he used that moment to express his heartfelt gratitude.

◣ For years those words lingered in the minds of many who heard them. What had R' Elya done to save the life of R' Chaim Shmuelevitz?

After R' Elya's passing, one determined individual set out to uncover the story. As he travelled distributing recordings of R' Elya's famous *shmuessen*, he asked anyone who might know the details. Eventually

he spoke with one of R' Elya's grandsons, who revealed what had occurred.

Years earlier, R' Chaim Shmulevitz had been suffering from a persistent and worsening sore throat. A biopsy revealed devastating news: R' Chaim had a malignant tumour in his throat. Surgery might save his life, the doctor explained, but even if the operation succeeded—he would never be able to speak again.

Facing this agonizing decision, R' Chaim turned to R' Elya for guidance. "What should I do?" he asked. "Right now it hurts to speak, but at least I can still speak. Should I undergo the surgery and lose my voice entirely?"

R' Elya answered. "I cannot imagine that Hashem would not allow R' Chaim Shmulevitz to continue giving *shiurim*. There is still so much Torah and *mussar* that you must transmit to the world." He advised him not to undergo the operation, asked for his mother's name, and promised to *daven* for him.

Sometime later R' Chaim returned to the specialist to inform him that he had decided against the operation. Before he could say anything, the doctor examined his throat again to assess the urgency of surgery. To his astonishment the throat was completely clear—no tumour, no sign of disease, not even a lingering sore throat.

◣ Two weeks after hearing this account, another remarkable story surfaced in Cleveland, Ohio. R' Nochum Velvel Dessler shared an incident from his youth in London. His family lived about a fifteen-minute walk from the Lopian home, and he was close friends with R' Elya's son, Yisrael Nochum.

One day, while crossing a street on his way to visit his friend, a speeding car rushed past and narrowly missed him by the smallest margin. Shaken and pale, he continued on and reached the Lopian home a few minutes later. To his surprise, R' Elya himself opened the door and immediately asked with deep concern whether everything

was all right. Embarrassed, the young visitor tried to brush it off. "B"H, everything is fine," he said. But R' Elya pressed him. "Are you sure? Did anything happen on your way here?" Finally, he admitted that he had nearly been struck by a car while crossing the street.

"B"H—the danger is over!" R' Elya exclaimed with visible relief. When asked what he meant, R' Elya explained that the previous night he had dreamt the boy was involved in a terrible accident, and he had been davening for his safety all day until that very moment.

When the young man returned home, he told the story to his father, the great R' Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler. R' Dessler grasped his son's hands with deep emotion and said, "My dear son, I had the very same dream about you last night—and I have been fasting from then until now."

Years later R' Nochum Velvel Dessler would reflect simply that he believed he was alive thanks to R' Elya's *tefillos* and his father's fasting. R' Elya's granddaughter eventually married R' Nochum Dessler's grandson, and at the *sheva brachos* the remarkable story was retold.

◣ R' Elya Lopian was born in 1872 in the small Polish town of Grieve to his parents, R' Yaakov and Freida, simple but deeply pious Jews. The family lived in extreme poverty. Their small hut had a dirt floor, and the roof extended far beyond the walls to prevent rain from turning the floor into mud. Ironically, the constant foot traffic packed the earth so firmly that it became as hard as cement—so hard that a falling glass was more likely to shatter on it than on a wooden floor. One day his mother carefully washed the family's precious crystal and glassware and placed it on the table to dry. The young and energetic Elya rushed past carelessly and knocked over a glass, which crashed to the hard floor and shattered. His mother gave him a firm spanking to teach him to be more careful.

◣ Not long afterward another incident occurred. This time he was extremely cautious, remembering the lesson well. But one of the

family's hens wandered into the house. Startled suddenly, the bird flapped wildly and struck the table, knocking three expensive crystal glasses to the ground where they broke. Young Elya waited anxiously, remembering the punishment he had received for breaking just one simple glass. Surely the hen would receive an even worse fate. Instead, his mother calmly picked up the hen, stroked it gently, carried it outside, and even fed it some grain. The young boy was stunned by what seemed like blatant favoritism. His first thought was, "I wish I were a hen!" Years later he would recount the story in a *mussar shmuess* and explain the deeper lesson. As a child he envied the hen, but as an adult he realized the truth: it is far better to be a human being—accountable for one's actions and capable of growth—than to be an animal that bears no responsibility at all.

◣ When he was only ten years old, his entire family emigrated to America. Despite their protests he refused to go with them. Even at that young age he feared that life in America would make it difficult for him to grow in Torah and *avodas Hashem*.

This decision left him alone in Europe, essentially stranded in the town of Lomza, where he studied in a small yeshivah. The hardship was tremendous.

Years later he recalled that the poverty and hunger were so severe that he nearly starved to death. Yet he never regretted the decision. He believed that had he gone to America he never would have become the R' Elya Lopian the world eventually knew.

◣ In his youth R' Elya spent a year studying with the great *mekubal*, R' Shlomo Elyashiv, author of the sefer *Leshem Shevo VeAchlama* and grandfather of R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. From him R' Elya learned the fundamentals of Kabbalah. Later he learned in Lomza under R' Eliezer Shulevitz before traveling to Kelm to join the famous Talmud Torah of Kelm, led by R' Simcha Zissel Ziv, the Alter of Kelm. R' Elya arrived only about two years before the Alter of Kelm passed away, yet those years left an indelible impression on

him. "He was more than a father to me," R' Elya later said. At that stage of his life he lacked paternal guidance, and the Alter filled that void in profound ways.

◣ The Talmud Torah of Kelm was famous for its demanding standards. Its goal was not merely scholarship but personal perfection. Admission was difficult, and many applicants were turned away because they could not live up to its discipline. Order and precision were central values. Cleanliness and organization were treated as reflections of inner character. Even the smallest deviation from order could provoke a fiery *mussar shmuess*, because external order was seen as a mirror of the inner state of the soul.

Integrity was absolute. In the hallway stood a small table with paper, envelopes, stamps, and pencils for students to purchase when writing home. No one supervised the stand; each item simply had its price listed. Students took what they needed and left the correct money. Not a single coin ever went missing.

◣ The discipline of Kelm was extraordinary. Schedules were kept to the second. The Alter of Kelm was so punctual that local non-Jewish townspeople reportedly set their clocks according to the moment he passed their homes on his way to the yeshivah.

Talmidim were trained to ignore distractions completely. Once, a Polish general visiting the mayor of Kelm was told that the yeshivah students were so focused that nothing could disturb their learning. The general doubted the claim. To prove it, soldiers burst into the *beis midrash* during learning *seder* beating loud drums – but not a single *talmid* turned around.

◣ The discipline R' Elya absorbed in Kelm remained with him for life. Even decades later in Eretz Yisrael he would walk down the street without turning his head from side to side. Once, while waiting for a bus on the way to an eye operation, he briefly turned toward the sound of an approaching motor and immediately groaned that in Kelm

he would have received a full *mussar shmuess* for turning his head unnecessarily.

◣ He also maintained remarkable physical endurance. As a young man he sometimes learned standing throughout the entire night. Despite the strain he remained strong and energetic, channeling his strength entirely into *avodas Hashem*. He frequently fasted on Mondays and Thursdays and undertook additional personal fasts as part of his spiritual discipline.

◣ On one occasion, R' Elya noticed that a *talmid* attending to him was trying to maintain a *taanis dibbur*. "I once accepted a *ta'anis dibur*," R' Elya said quietly. The *talmid* was curious for how long. "For a year." The *talmid* was stunned. R' Elya explained that in Kelm it was common for *talmidim* to post notices asking not to be disturbed while learning. He simply placed such notices regularly so that no one suspected he had undertaken a year of silence. If he ever felt someone might grow suspicious, he would say a few words briefly so as not to reveal his practice.

◣ While still separated from his family in America, R' Elya married the modest and virtuous Sarah Leah, daughter of the righteous winemaker and *baal-mussar* R' Yitzchak Dovid Rottman of Lomza.

At first her father hesitated. "How can I take an "American" for a son-in-law?" he asked sceptically. He traveled to consult the great Rav of Stavisk, R' Chaim Aryeh Leib Mishkovsky.

When he entered the Rav's room he was astonished to see two glasses of whiskey already prepared. Before he could explain the purpose of his visit, the Rav lifted a glass and exclaimed joyfully, "Mazel tov! I hear your daughter is becoming a *kallah*!" Understanding this as a clear sign of approval, R' Yitzchak Dovid accepted the match immediately.

◣ After his marriage R' Elya returned to Kelm, where he learned in the kollel and formed a close study partnership with R' Tzvi Hirsch

Brody, the Alter of Kelm's son-in-law. Among those learning there at the same time were future Torah giants such as R' Yerucham Levovitz and R' Naftali Trop. The kollel maintained strict discipline: anyone wishing to leave the *beis midrash* even briefly had to request permission from the *talmid* appointed that week to supervise such matters. Within this atmosphere of structure, responsibility, and spiritual striving, R' Elya Lopian developed into one of the greatest *baalei mussar* of the twentieth century.

◣ As the years passed, R' Elya Lopian found that the small house in Kelm no longer suited his growing family. Housing in the town was scarce, and after great effort he finally managed to rent a larger home. The family packed all their belongings onto a wagon and arrived ready to move in. But when they reached the house, a man was waiting at the door. He explained that he was about to marry off his daughter and that there was no other home in the town available for the young couple. "If you take this house," he pleaded, "my daughter will not be able to marry."

R' Elya's family protested. They had worked hard to secure the house and were clearly entitled to it. R' Elya said nothing. He quietly turned the wagon around and returned to their old home.

◣ During the First World War, Kelm was subjected to heavy bombardment and the authorities imposed a strict nighttime curfew to keep civilians off the streets. R' Elya felt it necessary to remain in the yeshiva late into the evening with his talmidim, and only afterward return home to help his wife with the household and children—especially important during the frightening night attacks. Anyone caught outside after dark risked arrest.

R' Elya used the *Goral HaGra* and the pasuk that appeared was, "No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent" (Tehillim 91:10). Encouraged by this, he continued his routine, remaining in the yeshiva until his work was complete and only then walking home despite the curfew.

One night as he walked home from the yeshiva, a Russian officer stopped him and asked where he was going. When R' Elya explained that he was returning home, the officer offered to accompany him so that no one would shoot a man walking beside a Russian officer. Most nights, however, the soldiers simply failed to notice R' Elya as he hurried quietly past them on his way home.

◣ Until the outbreak of the war, R' Elya had remained in Kelm directing the yeshiva he had founded. Its distinctive emphasis on *Mussar* had made it famous, and it became a natural destination for graduates of Mussar yeshivos. When the Germans advanced toward Kelm, the Russians attempted to stop them at the city gates, but fierce fighting soon erupted inside the city itself. Cannon fire filled the streets and casualties increased.

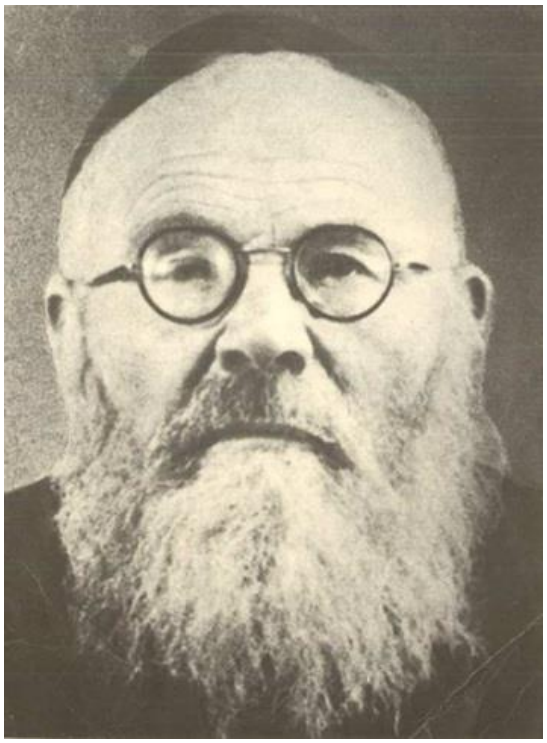
◣ Most of the townspeople fled the city by wagon or on foot. In the *beis medrash*, however, R' Elya calmly began the Gemara shiur as usual despite the thunder of battle outside. One curious student briefly stuck his head out the window to see what was happening in the street—and immediately a stray bullet grazed his face. No one else in the *beis medrash* was harmed.

◣ Many of the *talmidim* had come from distant towns, yet they remained with R' Elya even as the Germans entered Kelm. His courage and unwavering faith held them together through the chaos. Eventually, however, the war made it impossible for the yeshiva to continue operating, and by the end of 1914 it was forced to close.

◣ When conditions stabilized somewhat, R' Elya began traveling through Jewish communities across Lithuania. His purpose was twofold: to recruit students so that the yeshiva could reopen and to inspire ordinary Jews to strengthen their commitment to Torah and ensure that their children received proper Torah *chinuch*.

The war had spiritually weakened many communities, and R' Elya poured all his strength into rekindling their devotion. In each city he visited he delivered powerful *drashos* on *Mussar* and *teshuvah*, often

speaking for hours a day during the two or three days he stayed. His warm heart, resonant voice, and the passionate melody of his words stirred his listeners deeply and awakened many to renewed dedication to Torah.



◣ Rav Eliezer Zev Kirzner, who served as a leading Rav in Boro Park, described R' Elya's visit to his city of Vilkovisk. By 1922, many residents had fallen under the influence of the Haskalah and had withdrawn their children from Torah schools. When R' Elya came to speak on Shabbos in the large *shul*, the building was packed. With fiery conviction he spoke of the urgent need to strengthen Torah education. The effect was dramatic: attitudes in the town changed and parents once again began sending their children to yeshivos.

◣ R' Elya's ability to move an audience was legendary. On one occasion he traveled to Slovakia and delivered a four-and-a-half-hour *hesped* for three *gedolim*. When he finished, he approached the Alter of Slabodka, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, and humbly asked for a *brocha*. Afterward the Alter asked a bochur whether he had cried during the hesped. When the student replied that he had not, the Alter declared that someone who could hear R' Elya speak and not cry had no place in his yeshiva.

◣ Wherever R' Elya traveled he paid special attention to young people, especially former *talmidim*, encouraging them to return to learning Torah. Through these efforts the yeshiva in Kelm was eventually able to reopen and quickly regained its reputation.

◣ R' Mordechai Gifter often remarked that one of the greatest achievements of R' Elya was bringing R' Mordechai Pogromansky into

the world of Torah. R' Elya visited the boy's town and delivered a passionate *drosha* that deeply impressed the fourteen-year-old Mordechai. Afterward the boy asked to visit the yeshiva in Kelm. R' Elya soon discovered that the youth had virtually no Torah background—he had studied in a gymnasium and had never learned Gemara—yet he sensed extraordinary ability and a sincere yearning for truth, and he also learned that the boy was a grandson of the great gaon, R' Chaim Yanover.

Despite his youth, Mordechai was already running a successful import business with a warehouse full of merchandise, so he explained that he could only visit briefly before returning home. R' Elya nevertheless welcomed him warmly, instructing his family not to embarrass him if he unknowingly violated Shabbos, and arranging for older *talmidim* to patiently teach him Chumash and the fundamentals of Gemara.

Mordechai's brilliance quickly became evident—within days he grasped the methods of learning—but after several weeks he returned home to his business. R' Elya, however, would not let the matter rest. He traveled personally to persuade the young man to return, ultimately convincing him to sell his merchandise and devote himself completely to Torah. Mordechai then immersed himself in learning with remarkable intensity, and within two years he was ready to enter the second shiur at Telshe, where he grew into one of the great *geonim* and *tzaddikim* of his generation; it was said that he once learned the entire *masechta* of Yevamos in forty-eight consecutive hours and could absorb half a page of Gemara at a glance.

◣ R' Elya visited his home to persuade R' Michel Dovid Shlupover to return to yeshiva. R' Elya quoted the *posuk* describing the meal offering and Rashi's explanation that it alone is called a "soul offering," because it is usually brought by a poor person. Hashem regards it as if the person has offered his very soul. R' Elya

explained that in a generation when few learn Torah, anyone who dedicates himself to learning is likewise offering his very soul. The words penetrated deeply and R' Michel Dovid returned to Kelm.

◣ When R' Elya was young, his wife fell gravely ill and the doctors despaired of saving her. As he paced anxiously in the next room, a stranger suddenly entered the house and asked what had happened. After hearing the details, the man instructed R' Elya to gather the leaves of a certain plant, prepare them as a tea, and give it to her to drink. R' Elya followed the instructions, and slowly her strength returned until she recovered completely. R' Elya later said he believed the mysterious visitor had been Eliyahu HaNavi, sent not for his own merit but for that of his righteous wife.

Sometime afterward R' Elya visited the Imrei Emes, and asked him for a *brocha*. The Rebbe replied, "A young man who merited a visit from Eliyahu HaNavi does not need my brocha." R' Elya nevertheless insisted, saying that from someone who knew that Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to him, he especially desired a brocha.

◣ After WWI R' Elya spent a period in Grodno at the invitation of R' Shimon Shkop, serving as mashgiach in the yeshiva there. In the short time he remained he exerted a profound influence on the *talmidim*, many of whom later testified that his inspiration accompanied them throughout their lives. After about half a year he returned to his own yeshiva.

◣ Financial pressures soon forced him to travel to raise funds. During one fundraising trip in Berlin, he agreed to guide a poor man to a house located down a dark alley. Once inside the alley the man attacked him, beat him unconscious, and stole all the money he had collected for the yeshiva. R' Elya was devastated at the thought of returning empty-handed.

◣ Around that time he learned that the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva in London was seeking a rosh yeshiva. Recognizing that constant fundraising travel was exhausting and left him little time for Torah or family, R'

Elya considered the offer but hesitated to undertake such a distant move. He consulted the *Goral HaGra*. The *posuk* that appeared was, "I shall go down with you to Egypt, and I shall surely bring you up again" (Bereishis 46:4). Encouraged by this sign, he traveled to London and became the rosh yeshiva. R' Elya placed the yeshiva in Kelm under capable leadership, while continuing to guide it from afar. His schedule in London was demanding, with daily shiurim and weekly *drashos*. Two years later his family joined him, and they remained in England through the years of WWII.

◣ When R' Elya's father-in-law in Yerushalayim heard that the family had moved to London, he was deeply distressed. "I don't know what has happened to my son-in-law," he exclaimed. "He was such a *tzaddik*—how could he bring his family to London?"

He wrote to his daughter urging her to leave and return to Yerushalayim with the children, promising to support them. She refused, remaining faithfully with her husband despite the spiritual barrenness of England at that time. In later years their children would become pillars of Torah life in the country.

◣ The 25 years R' Elya spent in England were not easy. His youngest son, Yaakov Yoel, later remarked that instead of confronting the community leaders harshly—as might have been more effective—his father always tried to influence them gently through the language of *mussar*, a method that required enormous patience and perseverance. Yet through that quiet persistence he left a lasting mark on Torah life in England.

◣ The Jewish neighborhood of Whitechapel in London, where Yeshivas Eitz Chaim was located, was not an easy environment for a man of R' Elya's sensitivity. Public disregard for Torah and *mitzvos* was painfully evident. Jewish merchants openly kept the markets operating on Shabbos, and the widespread *chilul Shabbos* weighed heavily on R' Elya's heart, and the emotional strain eventually began to take a toll on his health.

◣ In 1930 R' Elya became seriously ill, and his condition deteriorated steadily until it seemed unlikely that he would survive. At that desperate moment, his devoted wife turned to Hashem with extraordinary *tefillah*. With tears she pleaded that her own life be taken instead of her husband's. She felt that she had already fulfilled her purpose in this world, while R' Elya still had so much to give to Klal Yisrael.

Her heartfelt *tefillos* were answered in a remarkable way. R' Elya's condition suddenly began to improve, and he slowly returned to health. But as soon as his recovery began, his wife herself became gravely ill. The course of her illness mirrored the course of R' Elya's recovery. As he regained strength, she weakened; she never fully recovered.

◣ After her passing, R' Elya gathered his children during the days of *shivah* and said something startling. "At this very moment," he told them quietly, "Mama is undergoing a very difficult time. This is the moment of her *din*." He urged them all to say several extra *pirkei Tehillim* to assist her soul during its heavenly judgment.

◣ Several of R' Elya's sons had been learning in the Telshe Yeshiva in Lithuania. Because of their mother's illness and passing, they returned to England for the *levayah*. Only one son, Hershel, remained behind. Hershel had deliberately torn up his passport in order to remove the temptation of returning to the comfortable life in London. Like his father years earlier, he chose a life of self-imposed exile for the sake of Torah.

Soon afterward, war erupted in Europe. Travel became impossible, and those who had come to England could not return to Telshe. In this tragic twist of history, the family later realized that their mother's passing had ultimately saved them. The Telshe Yeshiva was destroyed during the war, and many of its *talmidim* perished along with the Jewish community of Telshe. Only Hershel, who had been

unable to return to England, remained there and was murdered together with the yeshiva. *Hashem yinkom domo.*

◣ R' Elya lived in London for approximately two more years after his wife's passing. Shortly afterward, their eldest daughter, Liba, married R' Leib Gurwitz. Although she intended to begin her married life in her own home, she remained in her father's house so that she could help care for the younger children. Only after several years—by which time she already had children of her own—did she and her husband establish their own household.

◣ The extraordinary righteousness of R' Elya's wife became widely recognized after her passing. She had originally been buried in England, but in 1971 her remains were reinterred in Yerushalayim, near her husband's grave on Har HaZeisim.

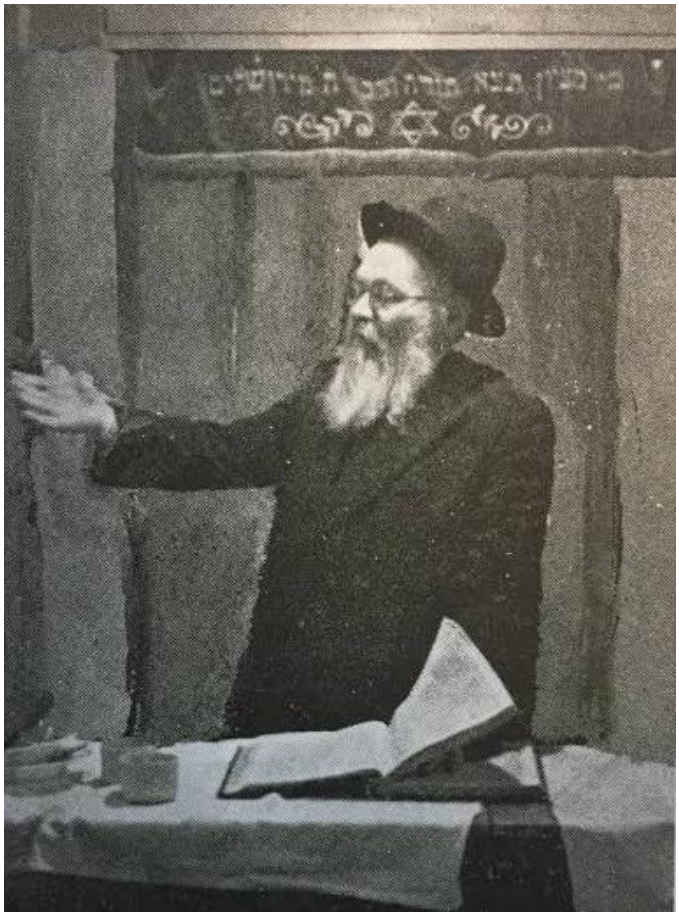
Nearly forty years had passed since her burial, yet when her grave was opened, her body showed virtually no signs of decomposition. She was dressed in fresh tachrichim and carried, according to Israeli custom, without an *aron*. Indeed no *aron* was necessary.

◣ R' Elya's influence on his *talmidim* extended far beyond the formal shiurim he delivered. A *talmid* recalled how R' Elya would often ask him if he had eaten supper. On one occasion the *talmid* replied that he had eaten soup and meat at a restaurant. R' Elya immediately asked, "But was it kosher?" The *talmid* assured him that it was, adding that the women who prepared the food even wore *sheitels*.

R' Elya responded with a memorable remark: "Never forget—one does not cook with a *sheitel*, and one does not *shecht* with a beard." For R' Elya, external appearances meant little; what mattered was genuine Yiddishkeit.

◣ R' Elya's concern for his *talmidim* was often expressed in deeply personal ways. As a young *talmid*, Tovia Preschel learned in Yeshivas Eitz Chaim under R' Elya. Tovia's home was far from the yeshiva, and when he returned from home visits his journey back could take over

four hours by train and bus. As a result, he often arrived at the yeshiva late in the morning, sometimes while R' Elya was already delivering his *shiur*.



When R' Elya saw Tovia enter the *beis midrash* with his suitcase, he would immediately close his Gemara and tell the *talmidim* to review for a few minutes. Then he would personally take Tovia's suitcase and escort him upstairs to his apartment—because Tovia boarded in R' Elya's own home.

R' Elya would tell him, "If you arrived at this hour, you must have left home before Shacharis, and you certainly haven't eaten." While Tovia went to daven Shacharis, R' Elya himself would prepare breakfast for him and then return downstairs to continue delivering his *shiur*.

When parents entrusted their sons to his yeshiva, R' Elya would promise them that he would not only be their sons' rebbe, but their parent as well. He cared for his students' physical and spiritual needs in ways that few rebbeim—and even many parents—could match.

◣ R' Elya was a master *mechanech*. He invested tremendous effort in ensuring that every *talmid* understood the Gemara clearly. He would not move on until he was satisfied that the entire *shiur* had fully grasped the material.

◣ With his trademark gentleness, he would rebuke wasted time without offending anyone. "I know that sometimes a *talmid* likes to *battel*—to waste time—but he also wants to learn. So I ask you: Are you *batteling* while learning, or learning while *batteling*?

◣ At times, R' Elya would pause in the middle of a conversation and glance thoughtfully at his beard. "There are already gray hairs here," he would say with concern. "That means I have already passed the first half of my life." He constantly lived with an awareness of time and accountability.

◣ He encouraged his *talmidim* to think deeply about life. He would say that three things should really have been reversed. First, people should be born old and become young later, so they would possess wisdom when they needed it most. Second, a ben Torah should first earn a living before being supported, so he would appreciate the sacrifices made for him. Third, people should die first and then live, so they would understand what life is truly about. If one fully grasped the reality of *Olam Habba*, he would live very differently.

◣ R' Elya placed great importance on precise pronunciation during *tefillah* and Torah study. Once, during a *shmuess*, he asked the *talmidim* if they knew the meaning of the Yiddish word "Abratzig." Nobody had heard of it. After listening to their guesses, he explained that it was simply the words "a ber" (bear) and "a tzig" (goat) slurred together. If spoken clearly, they convey meaning; if mumbled together, they become nonsense. "Likewise," he said, "when a person says 'Boruch Atah Hashem,' he has made a *brochah*. But if he mumbles "Bruchtoshem" incomprehensibly, he has merely said 'Abratzig.'" How much more careful must one be when speaking before Hashem.

◣ A stranger once approached R' Elya and asked forgiveness for speaking *lashon hara* about him. R' Elya insisted on knowing exactly what had been said. After much hesitation, the man finally revealed the details.

R' Elya then surprised him. "It would be easy for me to say I forgive you," he explained, "but I want to forgive you wholeheartedly. What you said was serious, and I know that right now my forgiveness would not be complete." He advised the man to return in two weeks. During

that time R' Elya studied *mussar* intensely until he felt he could forgive with a full heart. Only then did he grant *mechilah*.

◣ Years later, in Yerushalayim, a *bochur* similarly asked forgiveness for speaking lashon hara. R' Elya responded, "If I forgive you now and later discover what was said, I may still feel resentment, and then I would be guilty of bearing a grudge. Tell me what you said first." After hearing it, he admitted honestly that he was not yet ready to forgive completely. "Come back in two hours. I will learn *mussar* and work on myself." Two hours later he welcomed the *bochur* back and said, "Now I can forgive you wholeheartedly."

◣ During World War II, a prestigious London shul sought a new rav. Although many expected R' Elya to receive the position, he knew that R' Yitzchak Weingarten—a refugee from Belgium who had escaped the Nazis with nothing—needed it far more. Before any discussions took place, R' Elya escorted R' Weingarten to the shul on a Friday night, seated him in a place of honor, and publicly announced, "I have brought you a Rav who is great in Torah and fear of Heaven." R' Weingarten became the shul's rabbi.

◣ Although R' Elya taught about *Hashgachah Pratis*, he also emphasized that one must never rely on miracles. He distinguished between individual *hashgacha pratis* and dangers that affect entire locations. If a particular area was destined to be bombed, one was obligated to leave that area. Accordingly, during air raids he was always among the first to run to the shelter.

On one occasion, an air-raid siren sounded while R' Elya was in the middle of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Moments later bombs began falling nearby. After finishing, he hurried to the shelter. There, instead of speaking about the danger, he covered his eyes and lamented repeatedly, "I don't understand. Several *brachos* passed without *kavannah*." Those present never forgot the anguish on his face. The possibility that his concentration in *tefillah* had slipped troubled him more than the bombs.

◣ A *talmid* once approached R' Elya in a bomb shelter and whispered, "Rebbe, people are speaking *lashon hara* here." R' Elya immediately replied, "Then let us leave." They went to another shelter nearby. Minutes later, a bomb struck the first shelter, causing terrible casualties.

◣When bombs were daily falling on London during the Nazi blitzkreig, Mrs. Devorah Sternbuch, a widow with nine young children, was faced with grave decisions. A boat was leaving to America in a few days, transporting hundreds of British children to safety. Relatives in America were daily pressuring Mrs. Sternbuch to send her children. Many of her friends had already prepared their own children for the voyage. Mrs. Sternbuch decided to seek the guidance of R' Elya, then serving in Yeshiva Eitz Chaim. She asked him to perform a Goral HaGra for her. (A Goral HaGra is a method, created by the Vilna Gaon, by which Divine guidance is sought following an elaborate search in a Tanach to determine a *posuk* that would shed light on the situation in question. Only *Gedolim* familiar with this method are able to conduct a Goral HaGra).

R' Elya told her that one who performs this must prepare by fasting, so the earliest he could do it would be on the next Thursday. Mrs. Sternbuch anxiously returned on that day, but R' Elya had not been able to fast. He asked her to return on the next Thursday. But the ship was supposed to leave that Wednesday! The pressure from her relatives continued to increase and friends also urged her not to give up the one chance she had to save her children. But Mrs. Sternbuch was adamant. Without the approval of a *Gadol*, she would not send her children abroad. A few days after the ship left – without the Sternbuch children – news arrived of a terrible disaster. The ship with its 300 children aboard had been torpedoed and all passengers had drowned!

◣ An unaffiliated Jew named Samuel came to R' Elya seeking permission to shave during the thirty days of mourning for his

father. After speaking with him about the eternity of the *neshamah* and the value of *mitzvos*, R' Elya agreed on one condition: "From today on, never work on Shabbos again. Instead of growing a beard for thirty days, let it grow every week for Shabbos."

Deeply moved, Samuel accepted. R' Elya then asked his son, Reb Simcha Zissel Lopian, to maintain a relationship with him. Over time, Samuel became fully observant, built a Torah home, and raised children devoted to Torah, one of whom became a rosh yeshivah.

Years later, when one of Samuel's young sons became critically ill with double pneumonia, he came to R' Elya for a *brachah*. R' Elya examined Samuel's tefillin, put them on briefly, quietly said a few words, then instructed him never to use them again and to buy a new pair. He added a *brachah* that the child would recover completely.

By the time Samuel returned home, his son's condition had already begun to improve. R' Elya never explained how he knew there was something wrong with the *tefillin*.

R' Sholom Schwadron compared the incident to a story about the Brisker Rav, who once sensed that someone's *tefillin* were invalid because they failed to evoke the awe that *tefillin* should inspire. Such was R' Elya's extraordinary spiritual sensitivity.

◣R' Elya had long yearned to settle in Eretz Yisrael and often spoke about the Vilna Gaon's unfulfilled desire to live there. After 25 years at Yeshivas Etz Chaim in London, R' Elya handed over leadership to R' Greenspan and moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1950 at the age of 76. He would often say that he wished not to teach Torah in Eretz Yisrael, but to hear Torah there.

◣Soon after arriving, R' Elya visited the Brisker Rav during Sukkos. He sat opposite the Brisker Rav in silence for nearly half an hour, speaking only a few words. When he rose to leave, the Brisker Rav escorted him all the way to the street—something he was not known to do. Returning to the *sukkah* visibly shaken, he repeatedly

exclaimed, "I had no idea that such a person exists today." Turning to his family, he declared that R' Elya embodied everything that R' Yisroel Salanter taught as being the perfect person.

◣When R' Elya arrived in Yerushalayim, he stayed with his brother-in-law, R' Yisrael Luria. Although he had hoped to live quietly, he agreed to deliver a single *drashah* in the Great Shul of Zichron Moshe as a gesture of gratitude. Speaking on Parshas Shoftim, he captivated the audience with his powerful, heartfelt *mussar*. His booming voice and unique style left a profound impression, and word quickly spread that a great darshan had arrived in Yerushalayim.

◣Walking home after that first *drashah*, an elderly *talmid chochom* greeted him and asked whether he remembered a talented *bochur* from Lomza nearly seventy years earlier. R' Eliyahu immediately recalled him. The man, R' Mordechai Dovid Levin, revealed that he was that *bochur*. He then told R' Elya, "I remember you as well. You were the greatest *yerei shomayim* in the entire yeshivah. I used to sit near you during *davening* to warm myself from the fire of your *tefillos*." R' Elya smiled and replied, "Yes, yes—I have become spoiled since then."

◣The day after his famous *drashah*, leaders of the local *mussar* community begged R' Elya to deliver regular *shmuessen*. He initially refused, insisting that he had come to Eretz Yisrael to listen, not to preach. Only after lengthy persuasion did he agree. A decisive influence was his meeting with the Chazon Ish. R' Elya explained that he wanted merely to learn from the great Gedolim of Eretz Yisrael. The Chazon Ish responded by blessing him with the words, "They shall still bear fruit in old age," and told him that at this stage of life his mission was to be a *maggid* and inspire others.

◣A small group of accomplished *bnei Torah* soon formed around R' Elya and persuaded him to lead a private *vaad* devoted to growth in *avodas Hashem*. R' Elya agreed on one condition: he would be an equal participant, bound by every resolution the group adopted. Those

involved later testified that he was the most demanding member of all, meticulously observing every commitment. He was so sensitive to fairness that he often traveled to them rather than expecting them always to come to him.

◣R' Elya constantly demanded accountability from himself. After losing sight in one eye following a cataract operation, R' Chatzkel Levenstein asked what had caused it. R' Elya replied matter-of-factly, and quite humbly, "If a person looks where he should not look, he loses his eyesight. It is a miracle that I still have the second eye."

◣Although one of the world's leading eye specialists performed the procedure, R' Elya's blood pressure suddenly soared during the operation, costing him the eye and nearly his life. Years later, before another surgery, he explained what had happened. Prior to the failed operation, he had spent the time examining every detail of his life from childhood onward, fearing that Heaven was judging him. The intense introspection caused enormous emotional strain, which he believed led to the dangerous spike in blood pressure. Before the later surgery, he deliberately avoided such thoughts, and the procedure passed without incident.

◣On one occasion, after R' Elya left the *beis medrash*, R' Sholom Schwadron lay down on the floor where R' Elya had been standing moments earlier. When questioned, he explained that Chazal teach, "Be dusted in the dust of the feet of *talmidei chachomim*." "I take those words literally," he said. "This is the very place where R' Elya stood."

◣ In 1952, R' Elya and R' Chatzkel Levenstein traveled to Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi to meet R' Michel David Schleperovitz. They had learned that the yeshivah did not hold Shacharis at the yeshivah because food rationing made it impossible to provide breakfast. R' Eliyahu asked whether the yeshivah could at least offer hot tea. When told that it could, he addressed the *talmidim* and urged them to bring sandwiches from home so they could *daven* together in

yeshivah. The *bochurim* enthusiastically agreed. From that day onward, Shacharis was held in the yeshivah, and R' Elya personally attended each morning for nearly a year to strengthen the *minyan*.

◣ One day, while R' Elya was Mashgiach in the Kaminetz Yeshiva, he tripped while climbing the steps leading into the yeshivah. Instead of immediately getting up, he remained seated where he had fallen. Several *talmidim* rushed over and anxiously asked if he was hurt. "*Boruch Hashem*, I am perfectly fine. I am not in pain at all. I am simply trying to understand why I deserved to fall."

◣ R' Elya's *mussar shmuessen* in Kamenitz retained their power throughout his life. He never closed his eyes while speaking, yet he would later say that he never actually saw anyone in the audience. Yet every listener felt that R' Elya was looking directly at him.

When one *bochur* asked how it was possible to stare at people without seeing them, R' Elya explained that it was the result of total concentration on the message he was delivering. The *bochur* then asked if he could teach him how to attain such concentration. "You are already too old to learn it," R' Elya replied. "It requires tremendous effort beginning at a much younger age."

◣ A *bochur* once visited R' Elya, who warmly welcomed him and offered to make him a cup of coffee. Hoping not to trouble him, the *bochur* drew R' Elya into a deep conversation. While they spoke, he quietly made himself a cup of tea and drank it. When the conversation ended, R' Elya suddenly exclaimed, "Oy! I forgot to make you that coffee!" The *bochur* assured him there was no need, as he had already made and finished a cup of tea. R' Elya was incredulous. "If you had, I would have seen it!" Only after being shown the empty cup sitting between them did he believe it. So completely had he focused on his guest that he had failed to notice what was right in front of him.

◣ R' Moshe Aharon Stern once brought his two-and-a-half-year-old son, Yitzchak Zundel, to visit R' Elya during Chol HaMoed Pesach.

While R' Moshe Aharon spoke with R' Elya, the child played nearby with stones. Several times his father told him to put them down because they were *muktzah*, but the boy kept picking them up. Finally, frustrated, he exclaimed, "How many times do I have to tell you the same thing?" R' Elya intervened. "Leave him alone," he said. "Do you know what you are teaching him? He is too young to understand what *muktzah* is. The only thing you are teaching him is not to listen to you."

◣ Non-religious Jews in the neighborhood regarded R' Elya with deep respect, even awe. One Shabbos, as he was leaving the yeshivah, a car pulled up beside him. The driver asked in Hebrew for directions to a certain street. R' Elya replied warmly, "I know how to get there, and I would gladly tell you. But how can I help you continue traveling on Shabbos? If you promise not to drive on Shabbos anymore, I will give you the directions." His words, spoken with genuine love and concern, touched the man so deeply that he immediately agreed. R' Elya then gave him the directions. The driver got out, locked his car, and declared, "Until tonight the car will remain here. I gave you my word, and I will keep it."

◣ R' Elya constantly sought new opportunities to perform chesed. He required his *talmidim* to perform three favors for others each day solely for the sake of kindness, beyond any favors they would have done anyway, and he regularly checked to ensure they fulfilled this commitment.

He was even stricter with himself. One night, as he prepared to go to sleep, he realized that he had not yet completed his three additional acts of *chesed*. Quietly entering a dormitory room where *bochurim* were already asleep, he carefully folded their clothing and placed basins of water near their beds so they would be able to wash their hands easily upon awakening.

◣ After washing *netilas yadayim* before *davening* or eating, R' Elya would always refill the washing cup for the next person. Many people

perform this simple courtesy today without realizing that R' Elya was among the first to introduce the practice into the yeshivah world.

On one occasion, a *talmid* found him bent over in the yeshivah restroom and feared he was unwell. To his astonishment, he discovered that R' Elya was simply washing the floor. The custodian had not come that day, and R' Elya decided to clean the restroom himself as an act of kindness for the *bochurim*.

◣ Mr. Jacobowitz recalled visiting R' Elya in Kfar Chassidim on Tzom Gedaliah. R' Elya, already in his nineties, was too weak from the fast to receive visitors, so Mr. Jacobowitz returned after the fast ended. R' Elya's first question was, "Have you eaten yet?"

When he answered that he had not, R' Elya brought him into the dining room, seated him beside him, and arranged for coffee and refreshments to be served. When R' Elya noticed that the coffee remained untouched, he slowly rose from his seat and, despite his weakness, walked to another table to bring sugar for his guest. Although others could easily have done so, R' Elya insisted on performing the act of *chesed* himself.

◣ Just as he emphasized active kindness, Rav Elya also stressed avoiding irritation and annoyance. He referred to this as *kpeidah*, which he described as a stage that precedes anger. There is *kpeidah* in the heart and *kpeidah* expressed through speech.

While eliminating all feelings of annoyance may be beyond most people, avoiding irritated speech is a goal that everyone can strive for. To train his *talmidim* in this area, he advised them to dedicate two hours each week to completely eliminating any expression of annoyance. Specifically, he recommended the two hours before candle-lighting on Friday afternoon, when tensions are often highest.

◣ R' Elya's years in Yerushalayim came to an end when R' Noach Shimanovitz established a yeshiva in Zichron Yaakov. Though R'

Shimanovitz wanted to establish the yeshiva in Yerushalayim, the Chazon Ish told him, "Another yeshivah in Yerushalayim? What about the Galil?" He encouraged R' Shimanovitz to establish the yeshivah in Zichron Yaakov and promised him an added benefit: the guidance of the world-renowned *mashgiach*, R' Elya Lopian.

Although R' Elya did not join immediately, within a few years he became part of the yeshivah in Zichron Yaakov. The yeshiva flourished, and R' Elya was given the opportunity to mold a new generation of *talmidim* with the spirit of Torah and *mussar*. The Chazon Ish's *brocha* to R' Elya when he arrived in Eretz Yisroel – "they shall still bear fruit in old age" – was fulfilled in abundance.

◣ When R' Elya turned eighty, his son-in-law, R' Kalman Pinsky, joined him as *mashgiach*. R' Pinsky handled many of the practical responsibilities, allowing R' Elya to devote his energy to shaping the spiritual growth of the *talmidim*. Together with the powerful shiurim of R' Noach Shimanovitz, their influence enabled generations of *talmidim* to grow in Torah, *yiras Shomayim*, and *middos tovos*.

◣ R' Elya related to his *talmidim* as a father to his children. Their joys and sorrows became his own. Every *talmid* who passed through the yeshivah felt a personal connection with him. He made it a practice to meet daily with small groups of *bochurim* and establish practical goals tailored to their needs, such as improving concentration during *brachos*, rising earlier, or increasing acts of kindness. This kept him personally involved in their spiritual development.

◣ A central theme of R' Elya's *mussar* was continual growth through practical resolutions. During the Yomim Nora'im, especially before *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur, he urged everyone to accept specific commitments for self-improvement. "The only way to pass successfully through the *Yom HaDin*," he taught, "is to become a better person than you were the year before." He further encouraged people to resolve that any commitments they would

undertake during the coming year should carry the same seriousness as resolutions accepted on Yom Kippur itself.

◣ On one occasion during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, R' Elya delivered a *shmuess* about a particular weakness that required strengthening. He then transformed the lecture into a practical workshop, requiring every *bochur* present to sign a written pledge not to repeat the behavior. Some committed for a year, others until marriage, and some for life. When several *bochurim* missed the original *shmuess*, R' Elya gathered them separately, repeated the entire talk, and had them sign as well. No *talmid* was too insignificant to deserve his personal attention.

◣ When R' Elya visited the Brisker Rav to wish him a good year, he would sometimes bring lists of the resolutions his *talmidim* had accepted. Many of these commitments involved levels of restraint and self-discipline far beyond what was considered standard in yeshivah circles. R' Elya believed that such concrete commitments prepared his *talmidim* to face the *Yom HaDin* successfully.

◣ The *mussar* approach of R' Elya became respected throughout the Torah world. In his youth, one of America's future Torah giants joined a small community kollel. After discovering that the *hashkafos* of the rosh kollel were not fully aligned with those of the leading *Gedolim*, he wrote to R' Elchonon Wasserman for guidance. R' Elchonon replied unequivocally: if there was a mashgiach there like R' Elya Lopian, he could remain; otherwise, he should leave immediately.

◣ Although R' Elya spent many years in Eretz Yisroel, he never learned Hebrew fluently. He would explain, "I would have liked to learn the language, but at my age I do not have the time. I must prepare to speak the language of Heaven, for soon I will have to give an accounting for my deeds. I cannot afford to spend time learning the language of the land."

◣ As a result, all of his *shmuessen* were delivered in Yiddish. One *talmid* began spending evenings teaching Yiddish to several Sephardic *bochurim* who struggled to understand R' Elya's talks. When R' Elya noticed the *talmid* regularly leaving after supper, he inquired about it. Upon learning that many Sephardic *bochurim* could not fully understand his Yiddish, he was genuinely surprised. He had assumed that everyone understood because some had already mastered the language.

◣ R' Elya encouraged the *bochurim* to learn Yiddish, noting that many *talmidim* in Europe and England had quickly acquired new languages. Yet the Sephardic *bochurim* never stopped attending his *shmuessen*. Even when they could not understand every word, they felt the sincerity and power behind them.

One *talmid* later remarked that the greatest impact came not from the ideas themselves but from the way R' Elya delivered them—from the heart. His *davening*, his dedication to *avodas Hashem*, and the example of his daily life often influenced his *talmidim* even more profoundly than his powerful *shmuessen*.

◣ Nevertheless, R' Elya wanted every *talmid* to understand his words clearly. One newcomer mentioned that another *bochur* had translated parts of a Friday-night *shmuess* for him. R' Elya responded with a Gemara reference: "*A kli sheini* does not cook."

Once he realized that not everyone understood Yiddish, he attempted to deliver his next *shmuess* in Hebrew so that everyone could follow. The experiment was not successful. Afterward, the Sephardic *bochurim* privately approached the *talmid* who had informed R' Elya of the problem. Until then, they explained, they had understood enough to benefit greatly—sometimes half the *shmuess* or more. More importantly, R' Elya spoke from the heart, and "a heart understands a heart." In contrast, they could barely understand his Hebrew. The *talmid* gently conveyed the message to R' Elya, and the *shmuessen* soon returned to Yiddish.

◣ R' Elya devoted extraordinary effort to memorizing Torah. Noting that the words *Mishnah* and *Neshamah* contain the same letters, he spent years committing Mishnayos and the commentaries of the Bartenura, Rambam, and Tosafos Yom Tov to memory, focusing especially on Seder Kodashim in his later years. He urged his *talmidim* to master Mishnayos while young, explaining that even when Gemara becomes difficult in old age, Mishnayos learned well remain with a person for life.

Rav Elya would often have *bochurim* test him, and although he modestly spoke of knowing only a particular *seder*, they eventually discovered that he had mastered all six *sedarim* and their major *meforshim*. He emphasized that memorization allows a Jew to learn anywhere, under any circumstances, with no excuse to neglect *limud haTorah*.

◣ When R' Elya underwent eye surgery and was unable to read for a prolonged period, he simply continued learning from memory. R' Dovid Tzvi Eliach recalled visiting him in the hospital and finding him in severe pain. R' Elya told him that it was the *yahrtzeit* of his rebbe, R' Hirsch Brody, and that he had planned to learn Mishnayos for *l'iluy nishmas* his rebbi. Since he could not look into a *sefer*, he began reciting Mishnah after Mishnah by heart, including difficult discussions and disputes found in the Gemara. R' Eliach followed along in a Mishnah and could not find a single mistake.

◣ R' Elya similarly encouraged memorization of works of *mussar*. He himself had memorized sections of *Shaarei Teshuvah* and *Chovos HaLevavos* and was often seen reviewing them with tremendous enthusiasm. He emphasized the importance of knowing Chazal's ethical teachings by heart and quoted the Chofetz Chaim as saying that if even one teaching of Chazal were ever to become void, the world would not deserve to continue.

◣ He often spoke about the unique value of Torah learned in youth. Once he remarked that decades earlier he had completed almost all

of Shas. Now, in his old age, he was trying to finish the remaining *masechtos* of Zevachim and Menachos, but found it far more difficult. "What I learned then I remember perfectly," he said. "What I learn now, even from a week ago, I may forget." Nevertheless, anyone who discussed Torah with him quickly discovered that he retained an astonishing command of virtually every area of Torah and could analyze any topic together with the accompanying Rishonim and Acharonim as though he had just learned it.

◣ A *talmid* once accompanied him while he was collecting funds for an important cause. As they walked, R' Elya explained Chazal's statement that one who collects *tzedakah* is greater than one who gives it. First, the donor gives for himself while the collector works for others. Second, the donor receives honor while the collector often receives insults. Third, the donor gives money, but the collector gives his time—and time is life itself.

◣ R' Elya's powerful personality affected even people who barely knew him. One *talmid* recalled his first encounter with R' Elya in Zichron Yaakov. R' Elya did not speak a single word to him, but one penetrating glance left an impression that remained vivid decades later.

◣ One *talmid* suffered an injury that developed into a painful ingrown toenail. He found it increasingly difficult to walk. As an orphan, this *talmid* had no one to advise him how serious the condition could become.

One morning, while personally waking the *bochurim* for Shacharis, R' Elya noticed that he was struggling to get out of bed. After learning the reason, R' Elya supported him physically so that he could reach *davening*. Following Shacharis he insisted that the boy immediately see a specialist in Haifa. R' Elya even planned to accompany him personally so he could lean on him during the journey. Only after another *bochur* volunteered to go did R' Elya reluctantly remain

behind, and even then, he stood watching until they boarded the bus safely.



◣ Another *talmid* remembered the Shabbos that R' Elya spent in his family's home in Shaarei Chesed. After Shabbos, R' Elya suggested that the boy come learn in Zichron Yaakov and promised his father that he would personally take responsibility for him. R' Elya carefully escorted the boy on the long train journey north, carrying his luggage and ensuring his comfort.

During the trip R' Elya spent nearly the entire time immersed in a *sefer Zohar* with the Sulam commentary. Near Binyamina, after leaving the restroom, he noticed several military officers in the train car.

Gathering them together, he announced, "I am about to recite *Asher Yatzar*, and you should answer Amein." He then recited the *brocha* with such sincerity and power that the officers were deeply moved.

Shortly afterward, the train was delayed because a bomb had been discovered on the tracks ahead. Many passengers connected their miraculous salvation to R' Elya's heartfelt *brocha*. When informed of the excitement, R' Elya simply smiled and asked, "So, what do you think now? Was *Tefillas HaDerech* necessary?"

◣ Upon arriving in Zichron Yaakov, the *talmid* discovered how seriously R' Elya took his promise of responsibility. He ensured that the boy had a comfortable bed, sufficient nourishment, and every necessity. Once, when a fire broke out in nearby Bat Shlomo, the *bochurim* rushed to help extinguish it. When they returned, the

talmid found R' Elya anxiously waiting at the yeshivah entrance. Seeing him safe, R' Elya immediately urged him to wash, eat, change clothes, and rest.

The next day he gently rebuked him. "You had to go fight fires? Don't you realize that I accepted responsibility for you?" The emotion in his voice revealed how deeply he cared for every *talmid* entrusted to him.

At a later date, R' Elya encouraged the boy to engage in regular exercise, explaining that a healthy body is an important tool in serving Hashem. His care was not limited to spiritual growth; it embraced the entire person.

◣ R' Elya never rebuked someone while angry. He once stated that he had never punished one of his own children in the heat of the moment. If necessary, he would wait until every trace of resentment had disappeared from his heart. On one occasion, he was so upset by a child's behavior that he waited two full weeks before responding. Only when he felt completely calm did he address the matter.

◣ The tiny black swamp flies were among the greatest nuisances in Zichron Yaakov. They covered walls and light fixtures, invaded every room, and tormented everyone with their bites and incessant buzzing. Many people preferred sitting in darkness rather than enduring the swarms.

Once while R' Noach Shimanovitz was delivering a difficult *shiur*, the *bochurim* struggled to concentrate as they fought off the attacking flies. R' Elya, however, sat quietly among them, completely undisturbed.

R' Noach paused the *shiur* and pointed toward the *mashgiach*. "Look at the man of Hashem," he whispered. "Not a single fly dares come near him, while we are all under attack." The *bochurim* stared in amazement. R' Elya realized what had happened but showed no reaction. That afternoon, R' Elya came to *seder* carrying a towel,

waving it through the air every so often, quietly remarking, "There are so many flies and mosquitoes today." He hoped the *bochurim* would think he was suffering along with them. They were not fooled. They continued to notice that the flies simply avoided him, reinforcing their awareness that they were privileged to learn in the presence of an exceptionally holy man.

◣ R' Elya never dwelled on this extraordinary phenomenon, using it only to teach *avodas Hashem*. During one *vaad*, a fly landed on a *bochur*'s hand. As the *bochur* brushed it away, R' Elya explained Chazal's comparison between the *yetzer hara* and a fly. A clean, dry hand offers a fly nothing of interest, so it quickly moves on. But if there is moisture or an open wound, it lingers. So too, if a person refuses to give the *yetzer hara* even a small foothold, it eventually departs in search of easier prey. It is only when a person leaves himself spiritually vulnerable that the *yetzer* continues its relentless attacks.

◣ R' Elya spoke with groups of *bochurim* almost every evening and delivered public *shmuessen* to the entire yeshivah twice a week—on Motzei Shabbos before Maariv and on Wednesday nights. Though advanced in years, he possessed remarkable energy and an uncanny awareness of every *talmid*'s strengths, struggles, and potential.

◣ While visiting R' Elya in Yerushalayim, a bachur twice extended his hand in greeting, and each time R' Elya quietly withdrew. The second time he asked softly, "Did you immerse in a *mikveh* today?"

Not long afterward, the boy left the yeshivah and eventually abandoned Torah observance. Years later, when asked how someone who had treasured R' Elya's *shmuessen* could have fallen so far, he replied bitterly, "Don't remind me of R' Elya. Whenever I think of him, I can't bring myself to sin."

◣ Another *bochur*, Shimon, suffered from severe nosebleeds, and specialists concluded that surgery was his only hope. Before the operation, he came for a *brocha*. R' Elya instead asked whether there

was any area of *avodas Hashem* needing improvement. Shimon admitted he occasionally read secular newspapers. R' Elya replied, "If you continue reading newspapers, don't bother with the operation—it cannot succeed. First remove the spiritual cause."

Shimon accepted upon himself never to read them again. R' Elya then reminded him that Hashem alone is the true Healer and the surgeon merely His messenger. The operation succeeded, and the nosebleeds disappeared.

Years later, Shimon casually picked up a discarded newspaper. Almost immediately his nose began bleeding again. He hurried to R' Elya, who lovingly repeated the same *shmuess*, emphasizing that true healing comes only from Hashem and that spiritual failings carry consequences. Shimon never touched another newspaper, and the nosebleeds never returned.

◣ Once, while walking through Yerushalayim, a companion led him through Machaneh Yehudah to shorten the route. R' Elya was deeply distressed. He explained that one must avoid places where immodesty may be encountered, and that choosing such a route unnecessarily is considered sinful. Even the possibility of inappropriate sights caused him genuine pain.

◣ Truth and genuine *yiras Shomayim* were themes that R' Elya emphasized constantly. He repeatedly warned his *talmidim* never to allow *mitzvos* to become empty habits performed by rote. He would often quote the Navi Yeshayah's rebuke of those who honored Hashem with their lips while distancing their hearts from Him, explaining that mechanical observance without sincere inner feeling leads to hypocrisy and falsehood.

◣ R' Elya trained his *talmidim* to become deeply sensitive to the needs of others. During a stay in the hospital, *talmidim* took turns bringing him meals prepared according to his standards of *kashrus*. One day, a *talmid* first *davened* Shacharis before bringing breakfast. R' Elya gently but firmly corrected him. When someone

who is not well is depending on you, he explained, caring for that person's needs comes before *davening*.

◣ His compassion was equally evident when one of the *bochurim* became ill and refused to take the medicine prescribed by the doctor. Unable to persuade him, the *talmidim* turned to R' Elya. Sitting beside the *bochur*'s bed, R' Elya held the medicine in his hand and slowly recited together with him a *Yehi Ratzon*, asking Hashem to grant healing through the medication. When they had finished, R' Elya gently placed the medicine into the *bochur*'s mouth and remained until he had swallowed it.

◣ R' Elya's sensitivity to others extended to the smallest details. On one occasion he visited the home of a former *talmid* shortly after the floors had been washed. Before entering, he carefully cleaned the soles of his shoes to ensure that he would not dirty the freshly cleaned floor. The housekeeper, astonished by such consideration, remarked that she had never seen anyone show such respect for another person's work.

◣ R' Elya also worked tirelessly to instill *hakaras hatov* in his *talmidim*. He taught that gratitude should be shown not only to people but even to inanimate objects from which one benefits, citing numerous sources from Chazal. The *talmidim* were encouraged to appreciate everything around them—even the walls of the *beis medrash* and the dormitory that sheltered them.

A talmid once observed R' Elya folding his *tallis* after Shacharis. As he folded it, he rested it several times on a nearby bench. When he finished, he noticed that the bench had become dusty. R' Elya immediately went to fetch a towel to clean it. The *talmid* hurried to do the task himself, but R' Elya stopped him. "No," he said. "I must clean it myself. I owe the bench *hakaras hatov* for helping me fold my *tallis*."

◣ The rebbetzin devoted herself to R' Elya's physical needs with extraordinary care. She saw to every detail of his comfort, from

preparing his *negel vasser* each night to reminding him to dress appropriately for the weather and care for his health. R' Elya, in turn, related to her with the affection and guidance of a loving father.

◣ One year, the rebbetzin worried about the cost of renting a large hall for a family wedding that was expected to draw hundreds of guests. R' Elya suggested that the wedding simply be held on the yeshivah grounds.

When she protested that it was the middle of the rainy season, R' Elya calmly replied, "It won't rain."

Trusting his assurance, the family proceeded with the outdoor plans. Just after the *chuppah*, dark clouds gathered and a few drops began to fall. Alarmed, the rebbetzin hurried to R' Elya. He stepped outside, stretched out his hands, and quietly said, "Where is it raining?" Almost immediately, the rain stopped, and the *simcha* continued without interruption.

◣ A *talmid* who served as R' Elya's attendant recalled that one Friday night, the rebbetzin wanted to visit her brother, R' Eliyahu Eliezer Mishkovsky, after his return from the hospital. To leave early, she asked the *talmid* not to engage R' Elya in conversation during the *seudah*.

R' Elya skipped his usual *zemiros* and finished the meal quickly. When they returned home, they found the dishes washed. Assuming a kitchen worker had done it, the rebbetzin discovered that no one had entered the house. The next morning she asked R' Elya if he had washed them. He replied, "I knew how busy you had been all day. How could I let you come home and wash the dishes too?"

◣ R' Elya rarely spoke specifically about how a husband should treat his wife. Instead, his *talmidim* absorbed those lessons simply by observing his extraordinary thoughtfulness and sensitivity. Many of

his *talmidim* became known for their exceptional consideration within their own homes.



◣ When mice became a problem in the yeshivah's food storage area, a cat was brought in to eliminate them. After the mice disappeared, R' Elya pointed out that if there were no mice left, the cat might be hungry. He personally poured milk into a bowl and fed the cat, demonstrating his deep concern for *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*.

A passing *talmid* photographed the scene, and the image became a well-known photograph of R' Elya. Another *talmid* recalled walking with R' Elya when, instead of taking the shortest route, R' Elya made a lengthy detour. When asked why, he pointed to a long line of ants crossing the path and explained, "We must not step on Hashem's creations."

◣ Even in his eighties, despite being blind in one eye, he insisted on caring for his own clothing, shoes, and personal belongings whenever possible. He often remarked that a person should avoid burdening others with tasks he could perform himself, even his own wife. As a result, his children and grandchildren sometimes found it difficult to discover ways to fulfill the *mitzvah* of serving him.

◣ Even when advancing age required assistance in certain matters, R' Elya accepted help only when absolutely necessary. After the new *beis medrash* was built, he needed someone to accompany him down the steps, though he could climb them unaided. Yet before accepting

anyone's help, he would always ask whether the *bochur* had already eaten breakfast. If the answer was no, R' Elya refused to inconvenience him and waited for someone else.

The *talmidim* became so accustomed to this question that many who did not even understand his Yiddish simply nodded "yes." On one occasion, however, R' Elya rephrased the question, asking, "Is it true that you have not yet eaten?" A *bochur* instinctively nodded, only to find R' Elya politely refusing his assistance and waiting for someone who had already eaten.

◣ A *talmid* longed to preserve R' Elya's legendary Motzoei Shabbos *shmuessen*. R' Elya would not permit a tape recorder to be used until after he had *davened* Ma'ariv and recited *Havdalah*. Only after much persistence did he reluctantly allow a single recording, on condition that the equipment be completely hidden.

Later, when he listened to the tape, he became absorbed in the *shmuess*, reacting as though he were hearing someone else speak. At one point he even asked, "Why has he stopped speaking?" only gradually realizing that it was his own voice. When the recording ended, he quietly remarked, "I don't think I could repeat the *shmuess* as well as he said it."

The episode revealed his extraordinary humility: he never viewed a *shmuess* as his own accomplishment, but merely as a message entrusted to him by Hashem.

From then on, he came to appreciate the value of recording Torah, lamenting, "What a pity—I have forgotten a whole world of Torah." A collection of about fifty tapes was preserved, and he would occasionally ask to listen to them himself.

"A person must hear *shmuessen*," he explained. "I give them, but I rarely have the opportunity to hear them. Now I can hear them too." To R' Elya, listening to words of *mussar* was itself an essential part of *avodas Hashem*. When listening to recordings of his own talks, he

listened with the same seriousness as though hearing them for the first time, seeing himself simply as another recipient of Torah and *mussar*.

◣ Seeing a young *talmid* listening to a transistor radio without any visible wires, R' Elya marveled at how such a small device could receive signals from afar. He then pointed to his *tefillin* and explained that just as the radio functions through unseen transmissions, the *tefillin* draw spiritual holiness from Heaven. Yet just as a radio ceases to function if even one tiny component is missing, so too a single missing letter can invalidate the *tefillin* and prevent them from receiving that heavenly influence.

◣ R' Elya emphasized that the influence of friends is often even stronger than that of teachers. Tugging at his white beard, he asked his *talmidim*, "Do you really think you'll be influenced most by someone like me, who already has one foot in the next world?" Then, stamping his foot and pointing toward the ground, he illustrated that a person's peers often shape him more powerfully than even the greatest rebbe.

◣ Every *shmuess* concluded with Tehillim before Maariv. Every word was pronounced with extraordinary concentration and emotion. Hundreds of *bochurim* sometimes joined him, yet R' Elya's voice remained clearly heard above them all. He believed that saying one *perek* with complete sincerity could transform a person more than rushing through an entire *Sefer Tehillim*.

◣ A *bochur* once asked R' Elya for permission to attend a family *simchah* where many guests would not be religious. When the *bochur* insisted that immodest dress no longer bothered him, R' Elya immediately asked for his name and his mother's name so he could daven for him. "I am over eighty years old and have only one functioning eye," he said, "yet immodesty still pains me deeply. If a young man with healthy eyes is no longer affected, then he is spiritually very ill."

◣ R' Elya frequently accepted personal fasts upon himself, yet remained remarkably healthy. A physician who examined him at the age of eighty commented that his heart was as strong as that of an eighteen-year-old. He fasted on many of the days mentioned in *Megillas Ta'anis*, observed additional voluntary fasts, and during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* even refrained from speaking during the learning *seder*. Yet he concealed these practices so well that very few people knew how often he fasted.

◣ On one of his personal fast days, a wealthy benefactor was honored at a festive reception in Kfar Chassidim. Seated beside R' Elya, the guest poured him a generous glass of brandy and warmly wished him *l'chaim*. R' Elya did not want to reveal that he was fasting, nor did he wish to embarrass the guest. Quietly, he caught the eye of a nearby *talmid* and discreetly passed the glass behind his back. The *talmid* quickly drank it and returned the empty glass. R' Elya then lifted the empty cup to his lips, made it appear as though he had drunk, and wished everyone a cheerful *l'chaim*. No one noticed what had happened.

◣ Even after nightfall, when his fast technically ended, R' Elya often delayed eating. He would gather *talmidim* to speak with them, extending his fast for another hour or more. He explained that he never wanted his body to dictate when he should eat, citing the practice of R' Yisrael Salanter, who deliberately ate fish with many bones after a fast so that he would be forced to eat slowly and not satisfy his hunger impulsively.

◣ On one occasion, R' Elya returned from a trip only an hour before his regularly scheduled *shmuess*. When R' Moshe Aharon Stern asked whether the *shmuess* would take place, R' Elya declined. "It isn't because I'm tired," he explained. "Before every *shmuess* I spend about two hours learning *mussar* until I feel the inspiration burning within me. Today there isn't enough time. Without that preparation, I cannot give a proper *shmuess*."



◣ Once, after a fast day, R' Elya returned home very late. He had stayed to give an informal *shmuess* to many *talmidim*. He asked if he could rest for half an hour before eating, and explained why he was so exhausted. "It is not because I fasted. It is not because I spoke with the *bochurim*. It is not even because I delivered a 45 -minute *shmuess* before Maariv. The reason I am so tired is because I invested myself completely in learning *mussar* with *hispa'alus* before giving the *shmuess*."

◣ R' Elya lived by the teaching of R' Yehoshua ben Levi to arrive early and remain late in the *beis midrash*, which is a z'chus for long life. He maintained that once a person awoke, he should rise immediately and never turn over to continue sleeping. Although the yeshivah's Shacharis began at 7:00 a.m., R' Elya was usually in the *beis midrash* by 6:00, after already spending hours learning.

The *talmid* who cared for R' Elya recalled how careful R' Elya was not to disturb him. Passing through the room long before dawn, he walked silently and never woke the *talmid*. Though R' Elya slept only a few hours—or not at all—he always arose early. More than once the *talmid* awoke in the middle of the night to see light shining beneath R' Elya's door as he continued learning.

◣ Out of respect for his *seforim*, R' Elya kept his bookcase covered with a curtain and would not undress in front of it. One night a *talmid* noticed that R' Elya had climbed onto a chair to reach a *sefer* on a high shelf. Hours later he was still standing there, completely engrossed in his learning.

◣ R' Shalom Schwadron related that after Shacharis on a fast day he saw R' Elya standing with one foot on a bench and the other on the floor, learning *Shaarei Teshuvah* while still wearing his *tallis* and *tefillin*. When he returned eleven hours later for *Minchah*, R' Elya remained in the very same position, absorbed in the very same *sefer*. Even in old age, R' Elya was an extraordinary *masmid*. He would spend hours over a Gemara without moving, often remaining wrapped in his *tallis* and *tefillin* until the next *tefillah*.

◣ Even in his nineties, R' Elya personally walked through every dormitory each morning to awaken the *bochurim* for Shacharis. He did not shout, explaining that waking someone harshly could ruin his entire day. Instead, he gently brushed the sleeping *bochur*'s ear with the *tzitzis* of his *tallis*. The *bochur* would instinctively wave it away, thinking it was a fly, until he opened his eyes to see R' Elya standing over him in his *tallis* and *tefillin*, softly urging him to arise. Embarrassed and inspired, the *bochur* would quickly get out of bed.

◣ During *Shemoneh Esrei*, R' Elya stood perfectly still, his eyes lowered and his heart completely focused on Hashem. After *davening* he immediately noticed anyone missing from the *minyan* and returned to the dormitory to wake him gently. Rather than scolding the late sleeper, he would say, "Besides missing *tefillah b'tzibbur* and *zman Krias Shema*, you'll also miss breakfast and have to wait until after *Minchah* to eat."

◣ A few *bochurim* begged R' Elya not to continue waking them, insisting it was beneath the dignity of someone of his age and stature. R' Elya smiled and replied, "How many opportunities do I have here to perform *gemilus chasodim*? I have the privilege of serving *talmidei chachomim* by waking them for Shacharis, and you want to take that mitzvah away from me?" The *bochurim* had no answer. From then on, once R' Elya awakened them, they could never bring themselves to return to sleep.

◣ R' Elya was meticulous about completing *Shnayim Mikra V'Echad Targum* every week, another practice Chazal associate with long life. More than once, after Kiddush of cake and tea on Shabbos morning, those around him waited to begin the *seudah* until he had completed his review. When asked what he attributed his longevity to, R' Elya replied that from the time he became aware of his own character, he had never allowed himself to become angry with another person.

◣ He taught that proper *kavanah* depends on two thoughts: understanding the meaning of the words and remembering before Whom one is standing. A person who *davens* with these two intentions fulfills the essential requirement of *kavanah*. Listening to R' Elya *daven* was itself an education. He pronounced every word clearly, softly enough not to disturb others, yet with such sincerity that his *tefillah* sounded like a private conversation with Hashem.

A visitor once attended Minchah in the yeshivah and afterwards remarked that everyone had davened with remarkable concentration except for one elderly man in the front who spent the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* talking. Only later did he realize that it was R' Elya speaking to Hashem, in intimate conversation.

◣ R' Elya insisted that no *chazzan* wait for him to finish his silent *Amidah* before beginning *Chazaras HaShatz*. Whenever he sensed the *chazzan* was waiting, he would rap on his shtender as a signal to continue. On one occasion, when the *chazzan* still refused, R' Elya took the customary three steps back, allowed the repetition to begin, and then stepped forward again and quietly continued his own *Amidah*.

◣ Unlike many who sway during *davening*, R' Elya stood perfectly still, holding his *siddur* before him. Yet the effort of his *avodah* was evident on his face, which often became flushed from the intensity of his concentration. He taught that *iyun tefillah* is a lifelong *avodah* that can never be considered complete.

◣ A master of *dikduk*, R' Elya was exceptionally careful with pronunciation and expected the same of every *chazzan*. If someone repeatedly misplaced an accent or mispronounced words, R' Elya insisted he prepare properly before serving again. His insistence on precision extended to every *posuk*. Before Purim each year, the *baal korei* spent hours reviewing the Megillah with R' Elya. Having reviewed it the previous year was no substitute; every year's reading deserved fresh preparation and exactness.

◣ Only once did R' Elya serve as *chazzan* for *Mussaf* on Rosh Hashanah in Knesses Chizkiyahu. His awe before Hashem became so overwhelming that upon reaching the words **נרעש ונפחד**, he was overcome with fear and could not continue. He never again agreed to serve as *chazzan* on Rosh Hashanah.

◣ Shortly after R' Elya settled in Eretz Yisroel, R' Eliyahu Dessler learned that he would be spending Rosh Hashanah in Ponovezh. Knowing that R' Elya preserved the authentic *nusach* of Kelm, R' Dessler privately instructed the scheduled *chazzan* to ask R' Elya at the last possible moment to replace him because his voice had become hoarse.

R' Dessler understood that R' Elya would never accept the honor if it meant taking someone else's place, but he would not refuse a sincere request for help. The plan succeeded, and R' Elya led the *Musaf*. Those present never forgot the experience. His powerful voice filled the yeshivah. By the conclusion of *Mussaf*, most left with a deeper understanding of the *tefillos* of the *Yomim Nora'im* and a lasting appreciation for the awe and majesty with which they should be recited.

◣ The remarkable power of R' Elya's *tefillos* was well known. When R' Eliyahu Mishkovsky became critically ill on Yom Kippur that fell on Shabbos, R' Eliyahu opened the *Aron Kodesh* after *Neilah* and cried out with tears that Klal Yisroel desperately needed their rebbe. He led the *k'hal* in *Avinu Malkeinu*, *davening* for a complete recovery,

and shortly afterward the crisis passed. R' Eliyahu carried slips of paper listing the names of people who needed his *tefillos*. During *Shema Koleinu* he would carefully *daven* for each one. Observant *talmidim* noticed that some notes remained tucked into the back of his *siddur*. They later discovered these contained the names of people who had either recovered or passed away, showing how faithfully he followed each case.

◣ When R' Nosson Wachtfogel, Mashgiach of the Lakewood Yeshiva, required emergency surgery, an urgent telegram requested R' Eliyahu's *tefillos*. R' Wachtfogel had learned under R' Elya in Kelm. R' Elya immediately gathered the yeshivah to *daven*. Two days later, during the Shabbos *seudah*, he suddenly announced, "Wachtfogel is healthy." Only after Shabbos did they learn that at precisely that time the danger had passed. Those present felt they had witnessed *Ruach HaKodesh*.

◣ A visitor from America intended to discuss several pressing personal concerns with R' Eliyahu but never found the opportunity. To his amazement, during their ordinary conversation R' Eliyahu addressed every issue without ever being told what was troubling him.

◣ In his later years, R' Elya posted a notice on the door of the *beis medrash* asking that no one stand up when he entered, explaining that such honor caused him great anguish. He said **כי פשעי אני אדע**, *For I know my transgressions*. Although others saw only greatness, he alone knew his own shortcomings, and therefore felt unworthy of public honor. He would add that if he agreed to give *brachos* only because Chazal teach that even the blessing of an ordinary Jew should never be taken lightly.

◣ During a Shabbos *seudah*, R' Elya honored R' Tzvi Levenberg with leading the *zimun*. He explained that guests deserve precedence and that R' Levenberg was also a Levi. After praising the distinction of

Levi'im at length, R' Elya concluded simply, "As for me, I am only a simple Yisroel."

◣ Whenever R' Elya entered the dining room together with the *mashgiach*, R' Dov Yoffe, the *bochurim* would stand and begin singing. R' Elya joined the singing and dancing around R' Yoffe, convinced that the honor was intended solely for the *mashgiach*. Similarly, when a visitor once asked R' Elya where the *mashgiach* could be found, he pointed to R' Yoffe and said with complete sincerity, "I am not the *mashgiach* here—I only help him a little."

◣ When R' Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi began delivering a weekly *halachah shiur* in the yeshivah, R' Elya asked permission to attend. R' Ezrachi declined because he felt unable to speak in the presence of someone he revered so deeply. R' Elya assumed the refusal stemmed from concern that he might interrupt with questions, so he promised that he would remain silent throughout the *shiur* and simply wished to listen. His genuine humility amazed everyone who witnessed the exchange.

◣ A visiting *bochur* originally planned to stay in the yeshivah only until Thursday, but after becoming inspired by the atmosphere, decided to remain for Shabbos. R' Elya remembered that he had expected to leave before Shabbos and probably had not packed fresh clothing. He offered him a clean shirt and underclothing. The embarrassed *bochur* declined, saying friends had already provided everything. R' Elya was not satisfied until the *bochur* showed him the clean clothing, wanting to be absolutely certain that he had all his Shabbos needs.

◣ R' Elya would never kiss the *Sefer Torah* directly. He placed his *tallis* or *siddur* between his lips and the *mantle*. He explained that if he were ill, he would not want to pass germs to others, nor would he want to expose himself to others' germs. His concern for cleanliness extended to every aspect of his life. His clothing was always immaculate, despite living in an area plagued by dust and wind. His

room, bed, and person were spotless. Although Chazal's teaching about a "stain on one's garment" primarily refers to one's *neshamah*, he would add that it also obligates a Jew to maintain physical cleanliness.



◣ R' Elya disliked every title of honor. Descriptions such as "HaGaon HaTzaddik" and the like, made him uncomfortable. When he received a letter, he folded over the page so as not to see the flattering titles at the top, reading only the body of the letter.

◣ One Erev Yom Kippur, soup nuts were served with the meal. A *talmid* noticed an ant floating in R' Elya's soup and found additional insects among the soup nuts. Although another *bochur* urged him to remain silent so as not to embarrass the Rebbetzin, who had served them, the *talmid* felt obligated to warn everyone. R' Elya later defended him wholeheartedly. "If there were even a doubt that my soup had been poisoned," he asked, "would he have remained silent to spare someone's feelings? A possible prohibition is no less serious."

◣ Although elderly and often weak, R' Elya performed *mitzvos* with remarkable alacrity. On one *taanis* he lay down for a rest and asked a *talmid* to wake him before Ma'ariv. The moment he was called, he sprang from bed, washed his hands, took his cane, and hurried to the *beis medrash* with the energy of a young man. Similarly, at the *levayah* of the Chazon Ish in 1954, amid the enormous crowd, the 80-year-old R' Elya suddenly moved ahead with such speed that the

much younger men accompanying him could not keep up. In his nineties, when movement was more difficult, he slept partially dressed and even rested with his feet elevated so that he could rise more quickly to serve Hashem.

◣ R' Elya's *avodas Hashem* was marked by extraordinary intensity. When learning *mussar* privately, he would reach the words, **כי פשעי אני אדע** , *For I know my transgressions*, burst into tears, and repeat them over and over. Those nearby often found themselves weeping along with him. He also encouraged his *talmidim* to keep a private record of their *aveiros*, written in code so no one else could decipher it.

One day he showed them a small, worn notebook in which he had recorded every *aveirah* he could remember since his bar mitzvah. The entire notebook contained only a few dozen coded entries on one page.

Weeks later, a *talmid* found R' Elya crying over the notebook. After another half hour of heartfelt *teshuvah*, R' Elya quietly tore out one page and destroyed it, symbolizing that those sins had been erased through sincere *teshuvah*.

◣ *A talmid* who shared R' Elya's room noticed that every night, often long after midnight, he recited *Tikkun Chatzos* with tremendous emotion, followed by several *perakim* of Mishnayos by heart. If the light was still on behind the closed door, the *talmid* would wait outside rather than interrupt. One night, seeing the light off, he entered quietly and was startled to find R' Elya lying on the floor holding a candle. R' Elya explained that he had spread his blanket on the floor so he could recite *Tikkun Chatzos* properly. He said that one day he would stand before the Heavenly Court and claim that he had tried to fulfill every *halachah* and *minhag* in the Shulchan Aruch. The very beginning of the Shulchan Aruch discusses *Tikkun Chatzos;* he did not want to arrive in *Shomayim* having neglected it from the outset.

◣ While he was in his nineties, he once told his *talmidim* that old age does not automatically make a person think about his end; just as young people ignore mortality, so do the elderly.

Once, while walking through Yerushalayim, they passed a *Chevra Kadisha* vehicle. R' Elya remarked that seeing that should awaken a person to think about his own mortality, yet most people pass by without giving it a second thought.

◣ When R' Elya was 94 years old, he was overheard reciting *Krias Shema al HaMitah*. As he reached the words, "Light my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death," his voice was filled with such awe, sincerity, and longing that the listener was overcome with fear and trembling. It was obvious that R' Elya was standing alone before his Creator, preparing himself for the World to Come.

◣ A relative of R' Dov Yoffe recalled that when he was a lively ten-year-old boy learning in the yeshivah, he accidentally knocked over his heavy *shtender* during *Mussar Seder*. It crashed into R' Elya's *shtender* with a deafening noise, startling everyone in the *beis medrash*. R' Elya instinctively jumped, but without even looking up to see who had caused the disturbance, he immediately returned to his *sefer* as though nothing had happened. The embarrassed boy never forgot that moment. While everyone else turned to stare at him, R' Elya remained completely absorbed in his learning.

◣ To R' Elya, the Friday *seder* was essential preparation for the holiness of the coming day, and he was deeply pained when *bochurim* missed it because they were busy with Shabbos preparations. He often pointed to the practices in Kelm, where errands such as laundry, haircuts, and other necessities were taken care of on Thursday afternoon, allowing Friday to remain devoted almost entirely to Torah until shortly before Shabbos.

◣ Every Erev Shabbos, hours before sunset, Mr. Zilberman, the yeshivah's vegetable supplier, would drive R' Elya to the mikveh. Despite old age, illness, and harsh weather, he never willingly missed

this cherished weekly *tevilah*. It was especially difficult because of an old ear injury; on his doctor's orders, he carefully kept water out of one ear during each immersion.

One winter, R' Elya was bedridden with a high fever and barely had the strength to stand. Although he continued davening with a minyan throughout his illness, by Thursday he was still extremely weak. When Mr. Zilberman arrived on Friday, the Rebbetzin pleaded with him to stay home, fearing the cold weather and hot mikveh would cause a relapse. R' Elya explained that missing even one Erev Shabbos immersion would mean he could no longer be considered someone who immersed every Friday, affecting the halachic basis for immersing before Shabbos Chazon. With no answer to his reasoning, the Rebbetzin reluctantly agreed, provided a *talmid* accompanied him and made sure he dried off completely and stayed warmly wrapped before returning home.

◣ R' Elya related that one who properly prepares himself can sense the arrival of the extra *neshamah* received before Shabbos while immersing in the *mikveh* on Friday. He quietly testified that he himself had experienced this feeling on several occasions.

◣ After returning from the *mikveh* each Friday, R' Elya meticulously brushed his clothing and polished his shoes himself. He refused all offers of assistance, viewing even these simple acts as part of his preparation to greet the Shabbos Queen. He interrupted only when necessary to participate in communal needs, such as arranging an *eiruv chatzeiros* for the yeshivah.

◣ R' Elya's Shabbos table reflected the same careful priorities. Upon arriving home Friday night, he made Kiddush immediately before singing *Shalom Aleichem*. Whenever guests were surprised by this order, he would explain, "The *malachim* are never hungry. The people sitting at this table have often gone many hours without eating. Our first obligation is to feed them; afterward we can properly welcome the *malachim*."

◣ Throughout the *seudah*, R' Elya spoke extensively about the *parshah*, Shabbos, and fundamental Torah concepts. He often quoted Chazal's statement that Shabbos is equivalent to the entire Torah.

Zemiros were an integral part of his table, especially those composed by the Rishonim. One of his favorites was *Kol Mekadesh Shevii*, whose words distinguish between merely refraining from violating Shabbos and actively sanctifying it. R' Elya emphasized that the higher level is to fill the day with Torah, heartfelt *tefillah*, and *mitzvos*. Someone who truly appreciates the holiness of Shabbos, he would say, would never want to waste even a single precious moment of it.

◣ R' Elya often interpreted Chazal's teachings about Shabbos on a deeper level. He explained that the instruction to inspect one's clothing before Shabbos symbolizes examining one's "garment"—the body and soul—before entering the eternal *Yom Shekulo Shabbos*. A person should engage in self-examination and *teshuvah* while still in the prime of life, before it is too late.

◣ R' Elya followed the practices of the Vilna Gaon. He remained seated throughout *Kiddush*, including *Vayechulu*. During *Vayechulu* he gazed at the Shabbos candles, and during the *brocha* over the wine he looked at his reflection in the cup. Every word of *Kiddush* was recited with extraordinary fervor, leaving a profound impression on all who heard him. After *Hamotzi*, he cut both *challos*, preparing small bite-sized pieces rather than large slices. R' Elya always benched from a *siddur* and never by heart.

◣ R' Elya's *shmuessen* became one of the defining features of Yeshivas Knesses Chizkiyahu. Several times each week he would speak for two uninterrupted hours or more, yet no one found the length burdensome. On the contrary, the *beis medrash* was filled with attentive *talmidim* and visitors alike, all captivated by both his words and his delivery. One Friday night, before delivering an

especially lengthy *shmuess*, R' Elya announced that anyone who was not a member of the yeshivah should return home so as not to delay his Shabbos meal.

◣ Each Tishah B'Av after *Maariv* and the reading of *Eichah*, R' Elya would leave the *beis medrash* with a group of *talmidim* following behind him. Instead of going home, he would stop, sit on a large stone, and speak for over an hour about the *Churban Beis HaMikdash*. His words were so vivid and heartfelt that the *talmidim* felt as though Yirmiyahu HaNavi himself were lamenting the destruction. This impromptu *shmuess* became a yearly tradition.

◣ One year before *Ne'ilah*, R' Elya quoted the Gemara about two gravely ill people who both *davened* for recovery, yet only one survived. Why? Rashi explains in one word: *kavanah*. R' Elya emphasized that the sincerity and concentration of one's *tefillah* can determine whether a decree is changed from death to life.

Those few words inspired the entire yeshivah to daven *Ne'ilah* with extraordinary *kavanah*. That Yom Kippur left an especially visible impression on one *bochur* who had allowed his hair to grow long over the summer. Throughout *Ne'ilah* he stood with tears streaming down his face. Immediately after Yom Kippur he cut his hair, and he later became one of the outstanding *talmidei chachomim* of his generation.

◣ A *talmid* once wondered how R' Elya prepared himself for Yom Kippur. After the *seudah hamafsekes*, he quietly followed him and was astonished to see the *gadol* entering the dormitory restrooms to make sure enough pre-cut toilet paper had been prepared for the *bochurim*. Discovering one room without any, R' Elya personally sat down and cut an ample supply.

◣ On the day after Yom Kippur, before the *talmidim* left for the Succos break, R' Elya always reminded them of the *Cheit Ha'eigel*. Beyond the sin itself, he explained, Klal Yisroel's great failing was that they turned away from Hashem so quickly after Har Sinai. He urged the *bochurim* not to lose the inspiration they had gained

during the Yomim Nora'im by allowing it to disappear immediately upon leaving the yeshivah.

For the same reason, he insisted that every *talmid* sit down and learn for a while before returning home. Otherwise, he warned, the Satan could accuse them of leaving the yeshivah immediately after receiving forgiveness without learning at all. He would stress that judgment continues through Hoshana Rabbah, and that these days serve as a test of whether a person's Yom Kippur commitments were sincere. R' Elya would quote the Chasam Sofer, who once remarked that although his Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur had gone well, on Hoshana Rabbah his *kvittel* had been cast aside. That was the year R' Elya was *niftar*.

◣ In the fall of 1956, during the Sinai Campaign, patriotic enthusiasm swept the country. A number of *bochurim* sought to support the war effort, and some even considered enlisting. When R' Elya learned of this, he spoke passionately against it, insisting that there was no greater contribution a yeshivah *bochur* could make than immersing himself in Torah. "Torah was given in fire," he declared. "One who leaves the fire of Torah may escape one fire only to be consumed by another." Sadly, two *talmidim* who ignored his warning did not return safely from the war.

◣ One *talmid* became engaged while learning in the yeshivah. Having lost his father years earlier, he was deeply moved that R' Elya assumed the role of father, guiding him with warmth, wisdom, and genuine concern. Shortly before the *chasunah*, R' Elya noticed a severe heat rash on the *chosson*'s hands and arms and asked whether it had spread elsewhere. When he learned that it had, he instructed the *chosson* to travel that very day to the men's beach in Haifa and bathe in the sea.

The *chosson* followed his advice, and by the day of the *chasunah* the rash had disappeared. Later that week, R' Elya took the *chosson* with him to the dentist. The *chosson* watched in amazement as R' Elya

underwent a tooth extraction without any anesthetic and without uttering a sound. Afterwards, instead of having the *chosson* accompany him back to the yeshivah, R' Elya instructed him to remain and have his own teeth whitened. "A *chosson* should come to his *chuppah* looking his very best," he explained.

◣ R' Elya visited a young kollel family living in an apartment whose walls were saturated with dampness. He told the husband bluntly, "Your wife has every right to demand a divorce. In the *kesubah* you accepted responsibility to provide her with suitable living conditions, and this apartment is not fit for habitation."

When the young man explained that he lacked the means to rent anything better, R' Elya replied, "That is no excuse. Your wife and children cannot live in such conditions because you have no money. You must find the means—even if it requires traveling abroad—and I am prepared to help you."

The young man took R' Elya's words to heart and eventually succeeded in obtaining proper housing.

◣ In 1961, R' Elya spent ten days in Netanya at a rest home, recuperating from a period of weakness. A *bochur* stayed with R' Elya in his room, looking after his needs, and R' Elya repeatedly expressed his appreciation for everything he did. He also spent considerable time speaking with him and would ask him to test him on a *seder* of Mishnayos. During the stay, someone accompanied R' Elya to the Mediterranean Sea, where, on his doctor's advice, R' Elya soaked his feet in the seawater to help treat sores on his feet. When the prescribed time was over, he was helped back to a bench beneath a canopy so that he could put on his socks and shoes. The person with him ran to bring a pail of water to rinse the sand from R' Elya's feet.

R' Elya asked what the water was for. The person explained that he wanted to wash away the sand so that R' Elya would not have to put his socks on sandy feet. R' Elya objected that this would make the area around the bench muddy, causing the next person to get his

shoes dirty. The person explained that this was what everyone did and people expected their shoes to get a little muddy. R' Elya replied, "Nevertheless, I can't be the one to cause this to happen." He put his socks and shoes directly onto his sandy feet and walked back to the rest home.

◣ Before the guests left the rest home, they gathered to thank the owner for everything he had done to make their stay comfortable. R' Elya rose and recited a *Mi Sheberach* for all the workers: "Those who perform public service faithfully—may Hashem grant them their reward, remove illness from them, heal their bodies, forgive their sins, and send blessing and success in all their endeavors, together with all their brethren of Klal Yisroel. And let us say, Amein."

With this brief *brocha*, R' Elya conveyed a profound lesson: we should not assume that only leaders or prominent figures deserve our appreciation and *brachos*. Anyone who serves the public faithfully deserves special recognition and a heartfelt *tefillah* that Hashem repay him for his efforts.

◣ R' Elya was also known to take his dreams seriously and would sometimes fast because of them. While visiting England for his grandson's wedding, he was scheduled to travel by train from Newcastle to London. That morning he was troubled by a dream in which he had seen a fire descending from heaven onto his train. He debated whether to cancel his plans, but ultimately decided to fast to nullify anything negative that might have been indicated by the dream and traveled as planned.

He later learned that two airplanes had collided in midair and crashed onto the train tracks shortly after his train had passed that very spot. His dreams, he felt, had served both to protect him from danger and to alert him to spiritual concerns.



◣ R' Elya was extraordinarily careful about the possibility of ingesting tiny insects. When he ate matzah, he would have someone pass both sides of it over a flame to burn out any bugs that might have lodged inside. Once, while staying at his daughter's home, he fell asleep briefly at the breakfast table. He suddenly awoke and asked his daughter to inspect his food, explaining that he had dreamed that someone was holding a basket and banging it so that flies and insects were falling out. His daughter immediately opened the package of food she had intended to serve him and discovered that it was indeed infested with insects.

◣ Toward the end of his life, when R' Elya was over ninety, he suffered a heart attack. Even while seriously ill, his *tefillos* remained as intense as ever. One Shabbos, he suddenly experienced severe pain and was unable even to answer his grandson when asked how he was feeling. His face became white, and he was clearly worried that his condition might cause a disturbance on Shabbos, something he wished to avoid. As the pain gradually subsided, he repeatedly recited the words, "May there be no trouble, anguish, or groaning on the day of your rest," until his color slowly returned.

After the heart attack, he moved to Bayit Vegan in Yerushalayim because he no longer had the strength to speak publicly or work with the *bochurim* in Kfar Chassidim. His family watched him carefully, trying to prevent anything that might endanger his health, but R' Elya was not prepared to allow his physical limitations to interfere with his *Avodas Hashem*.

A few weeks after his heart attack, a *bochur* passing the *mikvah* in Bayit Vegan heard splashing inside. He entered and found R' Elya

trying to immerse himself. The water had not been heated and was too cold for him to enter, but he kept trying. The *bochur* begged him to stop, warning that immersing in cold water could endanger him. R' Elya asked whether the water could be heated. When the *bochur* explained that it would take about an hour, R' Elya refused to wait because he knew his family would become worried at his delay. He asked the *bochur* to help him enter the water as it was. When the *bochur* again tried to dissuade him, R' Elya said, "It has been several weeks since I immersed in the *mikvah*, and I must do it now." With tremendous effort, he entered the cold water, emerging shivering.

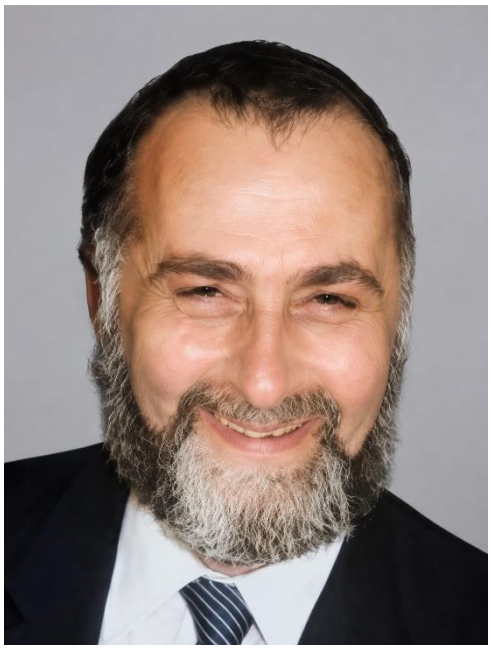
◣ Mr. Jacobowitz, who had been a *ben bayis* of R' Elya's in London and felt close to him, once visited him and found him in the yeshivah dining room. R' Elya offered him a cup of tea and then got up, walked across the room, and brought him sugar from another table. Mr. Jacobowitz was surprised and asked why he had not simply asked one of the *bochurim* to bring it. R' Elya replied, "I wouldn't want any of these *talmidei chachomim* to serve me." He often spoke about the importance of good manners, politeness, and a gentle soul, explaining that through these qualities a person builds his eternal edifice in the World of Truth.

◣ One night, close to midnight, a *bochur* passed R' Elya's room and thought he heard crying. He dismissed it as his imagination. Later, another *bochur* passed the room and heard the same thing, but he too assumed he must have been mistaken. Much later, a third *bochur* arose early to learn before Shacharis and also heard crying. That morning, the three happened to meet and compared what they had heard. Realizing that all had heard the same thing, they concluded that R' Elya had indeed been crying throughout the night.

Since it was only ten days before Rosh Hashanah, they initially assumed that this was his normal behavior at that time of year. Nevertheless, they decided to tell the Rosh Yeshivah, R' Elchanan Kunstat. R' Kunstat approached R' Elya and asked whether everything

was all right. R' Elya acknowledged that he had been undergoing a heavenly judgment that night. He had learned that it had been decided in Heaven that the time had come for him to leave this world, and he had spent the entire night crying and pleading for additional time. He explained that there was something he still needed to accomplish and that he needed another year or two to do it.

During the following year, R' Elya suffered a serious stroke but survived. He lived through that year and the next, and on the 20th of Elul 1970, exactly two years after that night, he returned his holy *neshamah* to his Creator.





So we begin this evening with **פרק ל, פסוק יא**. That's **פרשת נצבים**.

כי המצוה הזאת אשר אנכי מצוך היום לא נפלאת היא ממך ולא רחוקה היא לא בשמים היא ולא מעבר לים היא כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו.

The **רמבן** says **כי המצוה הזאת** is a reference to the **מצוה** of **תשובה**. And what we have to discover now is exactly what the **תורה** means **על דרך הפשט** in reference to the **מצוה** of **תשובה, לא נפלאת היא ממך ולא רחוקה היא לא בשמים ולא מעבר לים**. Says the **ספורנו**, when the **תורה** says **לא נפלאת היא**, it means **שתצטרך לנביאים**. It's not so obscure that you need a **נביא** to explain the **מצוה** to you.

ולא רחוקה היא, says the **ספורנו, שתצטרך לחכמי הדור הרחוקים**. It's not dependent on the interpretation of **חכמים** who will explain to you exactly how to go about the **מצוה** of **תשובה**.

Says the **ספורנו**, there are certain **מצוות**, if you do not have a **קבלה, הלכה למשה מסיני**, or if a **נביא** doesn't come, or if the **חכמים** through **תורה שבעל פה** do not bring the interpretation to you, you don't know how to go about the **מצוה**.

ועשו להם ציצית. Without the **חכמים** you wouldn't know, you wouldn't know where to start. You have **מצוה** of **תפילין**. You wouldn't know where to go, you wouldn't know what to do, you wouldn't know what materials, how, where, when. When it comes to the **מצוה** of **תשובה, לא נפלאת היא ממך ולא רחוקה היא**.

Indeed, says the **ספורנו**, the point is emphasized in the following phrases: **לא בשמים היא**. You don't have to go up to the heavens. You don't need a **נביא** to bring you down some insight as to how **תשובה** is to be performed. **ולא מעבר לים היא**. You don't have to travel across the seas to visit the outstanding **חכמי הדור** who will guide you in the process of **תשובה**.

But rather it is a simple **מצוה** as the **פסוק** concludes, **כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד**, it is something which is very near to you, **בפיך** referring to **וידוי, ובלבבך** and referring to **הרהורי תשובה, לעשותו**. So for the **ספורנו** then, the emphasis is on the fact that the **מצוה** of **תשובה** is easily understood, easily explained, there's nothing esoteric about it. You don't need a **נביא** and you don't need a **חכם**.

Interestingly enough, there is a variation on this theme of the **ספורנו** in the **פירוש על התורה** of the **רב זלמן סורוצקין זצל, אזנים לתורה**.

And he uses the motif of the **ספורנו**, namely invoking the **נביא** and the **חכם**, but gives it a different twist. He refers us to a **ירושלמי** in **מכות** in **פרק ב**. The **ירושלמי** there tells us that many were asked: what is the law that pertains to the sinner? The **נביא** was asked, and the **נביא** says the sinner has to die.

חכמה was asked, and חכמה answered the sinner has to die.

הקדוש ברוך הוא was asked, and הקדוש ברוך הוא answered, יעשה תשובה ויתכפר. Says רב זלמן סורוצקין, I would like to suggest that whereas the ספורנו says that you don't need a נביא and you don't need a חכם in order to explain to you what תשובה is, I would like to suggest that what it means is, according to נבואה and according to חכמה, by all natural laws by which הקדוש ברוך הוא created the world, תשובה should not exist. How do you wipe out the past? A person through a mental process... eradicates things that have taken place?

נבואה cannot understand, couldn't possibly fathom that there could be a concept such as תשובה.

חכמה similarly couldn't perceive that there should be some logic whereby one is able to perform some mental process and the past ceases to exist מכאן ולהבא. So therefore when we say לא בשמים היא referring to נבואה and we refer לא מעבר לים referring to חכמה, it is not, says the אזנים לתורה as the ספורנו suggests, or not only as the ספורנו suggests, that we don't need the נביא and the חכם to explain, but rather חכמה and נבואה do not perceive the possibility of a concept and process such as תשובה, because we recognize תשובה says the ירושלמי במכות as a חסד of הקדוש ברוך הוא which as it were is a special act over and above the laws which pertain in the world. We need this particular theme as we will see as we proceed. Now interestingly enough, a very unusual question was asked.

If in fact as the ספורנו points out and as the רמב"ן points out that the performance of תשובה is a מצווה and not only is a מצווה but the תורה has actually called it a מצווה כי המצוה הזאת. Why don't we say a ברכה before we do תשובה? - אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעשות תשובה.

I came across two answers to this question. One answer is found in the תשובות of the בית יצחק, the בית יצחק is רבי יצחק שמלקיש זכר צדיק לברכה, one of the great פוסקים of previous generations.

And he makes a very interesting observation and it is the following: Whenever an individual performs a positive commandment and the need to perform that positive commandment arises out of a transgression, then you cannot make a **ברכה** on the performance of the positive commandment. E.g. there is a **מצווה** that if a person steals **והשיב את הגזלה**. In fact the **גמרא** calls **גזלה לאו הניתק לעשה**, it is a negative commandment which can be rectified by the performance of a positive commandment.

Says the **בית יצחק**, did anyone ever suggest that a person who sets about returning the stolen object before he gives it back says **אשר קדשנו במצותיו**? There's no such thing as making a **ברכה** before performing that **מצווה** because the performance of the positive commandment only became necessary by virtue of the fact that the individual had transgressed, and it is the transgression which makes the positive commandment necessary.

Likewise says the **בית יצחק** in the case of **תשובה**. Even though it is a positive commandment, but had I not transgressed, there would be no need for me to perform the **מצווה** of **תשובה**. Likewise, since the necessity of that positive commandment comes about through a desecration of a **מצווה**, transgressing a **לאו** or whatever it may be, therefore the recitation of a **ברכה** is most inappropriate.

That is the answer of the **בית יצחק** at the end of **חלק יורה דעה**. A simpler answer to my mind is given by the **תלמיד** of the **בית יצחק** in a **ספר** called **דרש והעיון**. And he suggests very simply that whenever a **מצווה** involves a mental process alone, no **ברכה** is recited. A classic proof for that would be the following.

Burning of **חמץ**, the physical removal of **חמץ** is only a **מצווה מדרבנן**, a rabbinic **מצווה**. And yet we make a **ברכה אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על ביעור חמץ**.

ביטול חמץ on the other hand is a **מצווה מן התורה**, as the **גמרא** says, everybody will know **מדאורייתא בביטול בעלמא סגי רק מדרבנן צריך ביעור**, the **גמרא** in **דף ד עמוד ב בפסחים**.

ביטול חמץ is the performance of a **מצות עשה**, according to many it is contained in the word **תשביתו**.

And yet, there is no **ברכה** before we are **מבטל** the **חמץ**. There's no **ברכה** at all. Says the **דרש והעיון**, the reason is because even though there is a recitation, but the actual **ביטול** is a mental process where I am considering whatever it is the **חמץ** to be **כעפרא דארעא**. And when something involves a mental process, then there is no **ברכה** recited whatsoever.

And since **תשובה** is in essence a mental process, **שמא הרהר תשובה בלבו** as the **גמרא** says in **קידושין**, so therefore there is no **ברכה** mandated for the performance of **תשובה**.

A Baby Who Couldn't Swallow by Rabbi Yaakov Rahimi

Two years earlier, a little boy named Shua was born. For most parents, watching their baby drink milk is one of the most ordinary things in the world. For Shua's parents, it was terrifying.

Their baby could not swallow safely.

Every time Shua drank, there was a danger that the liquid would enter his lungs instead of going where it was supposed to go. Even something as innocent as swallowing water during a bath could potentially send him to the hospital.

Suddenly, something that almost every parent takes for granted became the center of their lives. ***Swallowing.***

There were doctors. Specialists. Monitors. Oxygen levels. Swallow studies. Feeding tubes. Hospital admissions. Surgeries. Therapy. Nursing care in their home.

His parents spent hundreds of hours researching his condition, searching desperately for someone who could help their son. But Shua's condition was extremely rare. According to the account, they were told it affected only about one in 100,000 people.

They refused to give up. They traveled to specialists. Eventually, they made their way to Cincinnati to see a leading airway surgeon. Maybe this would finally be the answer. Maybe this doctor would know what to do. But after everything they had gone through, they returned home without the solution they had desperately hoped for. ***Shua still couldn't swallow safely.***

Then came an appointment on June 15. The family met with another top doctor. His prognosis was devastating. They were told that it could take another **two or three years** before Shua might learn to swallow safely. And even that was uncertain. Maybe one day he would be able to swallow normally. Maybe not. There was no simple treatment. No quick procedure. No doctor who could promise them that everything would be okay.

After two years of searching, his parents were being told: ***You may have years more to wait.*** They continued doing everything they could. And they continued davening.

Then, less than a month later, the family made a decision. ***Not a medical decision. A spiritual one.***

On July 12, Shua's family sponsored a speech in their neighborhood by Rabbi Yechezkel Menashe about **shemiras halashon**. They needed a yeshuah. And they wanted to do something meaningful as a zechus for their little boy.

The family accepted upon themselves to begin learning two halachos every day from the **Chafetz Chaim** and to strengthen themselves in guarding their speech.

They weren't making a deal with Hashem. They couldn't know what Hashem would do. They simply looked at themselves and said: ***There is something we can change.***

Their son was struggling with his mouth - with the ability to swallow. And they would work on how they used their own mouths. They began

learning the halachos of shemiras halashon. ***Two halachos every day.***

Meanwhile, the doctors continued trying to determine what was happening inside Shua's lungs. The family was instructed to allow him to sip small amounts of milk over the following weeks. Afterward, the doctors would examine his lungs and determine what damage had occurred and what treatment would be necessary.

Imagine being his parents. Every sip could potentially enter their child's lungs. But they followed the medical instructions. And they continued their new kabbalah.

One day. Two days. A week. Two weeks. - ***And then came day seventeen.***

On July 29, just seventeen days after the family began strengthening themselves in shemiras halashon, Shua was examined again. His parents waited for the results.

And then the doctor told them something they had been waiting two years to hear: ***"Shua seems to be protecting his airways and drinking safely."*** His lungs were clear. The tests came back normal.

Think about what those words meant to his parents. For two years, they had lived with fear every time their child swallowed. They had gone from doctor to doctor. They had endured hospital stays. Surgeries. Tests. Therapies. They had traveled to specialists. And just weeks earlier, they had been told that it could take another **two or three years** before their son might learn to swallow safely.

Now, seventeen days after beginning their new kabbalah, they were being told: ***He was drinking safely.***

According to the mother's account, the doctors had no medical explanation for why the change had happened so quickly.

After two years of waiting... Two years of worrying... Two years of doctors... Two years of hospitals... Two years of tefillos...

Their little boy could finally do something almost everyone else takes completely for granted.

He could swallow.

There is a powerful lesson here.

When we are going through something difficult, our natural reaction is to ask Hashem: Please change my situation. Please heal. Please help. Please open the door. Please send the yeshuah.

And of course we should daven. But sometimes there is another question we can ask:

What can I change?

Not because we know why the challenge came. Not because we can calculate Hashem's ways. And certainly not because every kabbalah guarantees the outcome we want. But because every challenge can also become an opportunity to grow.

Shua's family could not control the medical condition. They could not force the doctors to find a cure. They could not make their child swallow. But there was something they could control. - ***Their own mouths.***

Never underestimate what spiritual growth can accomplish.

We may never know what one kabbalah accomplishes in Shamayim. We may never know what one tefillah accomplishes. We may never know what happens when we close our mouths instead of saying the words we desperately want to say.

And you never know the power of - ***one word left unspoken.***

לֹא בַּשָּׁמַיִם הִיא' means that the Torah is already planted inside the heart of every Jew. Learning Torah is uncovering what is within, not bringing in something new." ~ Rav Tzadok HaKohen.





The Power of One Kapitel Tehillim

Throughout the extraordinary days of Elul, it is customary to recite *kapitel "L'Dovid Hashem Ori"* following davening of *shachris* and *maariv*.

As noted in the *siddurim* of the *Arizal* and Reb Shabsi, this practice begins on *Rosh Chodesh Elul* and continues through *Shemini Atzeres* or *Simchas Torah*.

Siddur Reb Shabsi emphasizes that reciting this *kapitel* carries immense spiritual weight, possessing the power to nullify harsh decrees and draw down the thirteen *middos* of *rachamim* (mercy).

Despite its potency, many people fall into a mechanical routine after a few days, failing to grasp the profound depth of the prayer.

To truly appreciate its significance, let us explore a remarkable story that reveals why its value is often hidden from us.

Recorded in the *sefer Nezer Hakodesh*, this account was related by Reb Shimon Zhelechover, the *mashgiach* of *Chachmei Lublin*. His *talmid*, the renowned *posek hador* Rav Wosner, famously described him in *Shevet Halevi* as a **ספר תורה שלם בנגלה ובנסתר** – perfect *Sefer Torah* in both revealed and hidden wisdom.

Reb Shimon recounted a visit to the city of Sanz, where Rav Aryeh Leibush served as the Rav. He noticed that the local *minhag* did not include reciting *"L'Dovid Hashem Ori."*

Curious, he asked the residents, "Why do you omit this *kapitel Tehillim?* Even the *Shinover Rav,* the son of the *Sanzer Rav,* makes sure to say it."

Before they could respond, Reb Shimon provided the explanation himself through a powerful story originally shared by the *Baal Shem Tov.*

The *Baal Shem Tov's rebbe, Reb Eliyahu Baal Shem,* was once summoned by a childless nobleman. The nobleman demanded a blessing for children, threatening to initiate an expulsion of the local Jewish communities – akin to the Spanish Inquisition – if his request was not fulfilled. - Thousands of families were at risk.

Intervening to save his people, Reb Eliyahu promised the nobleman a child within the year. *The Baal Shem Tov* noted that this was an immense spiritual commitment for his *rebbe*, requiring intense effort, but eventually, the promise was fulfilled.

However, the story did not end there. In the *Beis Din shel Ma'aleh* (Heavenly Court), they initially sought to penalize Reb Eliyahu with sixty lashes of fire for his actions, a severe punishment mentioned in the *Gemara*.

Recognizing that his actions were performed solely for the benefit of the *Yidden*, the punishment was mitigated. Instead of physical retribution, a decree was made to diminish the public appreciation for two exceptionally powerful *tefillos*.

The first was *"Kegavna,"* the passage from the *Zohar* recited on Friday nights. The second was to obscure the true significance of *"L'Dovid Hashem Ori"* during *Elul*. A decree was issued so that people would no longer recognize their transformative value.

Rabbi Shimon Zhelechover concluded with a fascinating detail: *Rebbe Elimelech* of Lizhensk, a master to great *tzaddikim*, did not recite *"Kegavna"* but made sure to recite *"L'Dovid Hashem Ori."* In effect, he accepted only half of the heavenly decree.

Conversely, the *Apter Rav (the Ohev Yisrael),* a student of Rebbe Elimelech, chose to recite *"Kegavna"* but did not say *"L'Dovid Hashem Ori"* during *Elul.*

Rabbi Shimon Zhelechover's point was clear: *"L'Dovid Hashem Ori"* is so potent that when the Heavenly Court sought to penalize Reb Eliyahu, they chose to weaken our commitment to it as a way to hide its awesome power.

In these sacred days, we must wake up to the immense value of this custom. We should recognize that its impact is only diminished when we lose our enthusiasm and understanding of its true weight.

Since we are already reciting it, let us do so with renewed and deep intention. With Hashem's help, we can break through the routine, nullify harsh decrees, and draw down abundant blessings for the year ahead.

Precious Moments With Rav Chaim - Artscroll

No Bell

At every moment and at every step of the way, Rav Chaim followed halachah. Even at times when most people would be confused or in a panic, Rav Chaim calmly did as halachah demanded.

His wife, Rebbetzin Batsheva Esther, died suddenly on Shabbos Chol HaMoed Succos. Rav Chaim did not cry because it was Shabbos. He sat alone and didn't speak; he let himself cry only on Motza'ei Shabbos. Shivah began the day after Simchas Torah.

Usually, when Rav Chaim needed someone, he rang a bell. Now, during shivah, he did not ring the bell. He called out instead.

When his grandson asked why he was not using the bell, Rav Chaim answered, "It's Yom Tov Sheini (the second day of Yom Tov, which is kept only outside of Eretz Yisrael) today." Rav Chaim had a minhag of not doing melachos d'Oraisa (commandments from the Torah) on

that second day of Yom Tov. He didn't forget that, even though this was a day when no one was thinking clearly. The family was amazed that on such a hard day, when everyone was thinking about the shivah, Rav Chaim didn't forget his minhag.

Melaveh Malkah

"I was in Rav Chaim's home on Motza'ei Shabbos," says Rav Eliezer Turk. "His rebbetzin came in. She sounded worried and said, 'There's nothing to eat for melaveh malkah. They ate all the food on Shabbos. There's no food left in the house.'

"'There's not even a little cholent left?' asked Rav Chaim.

"'No, nothing,' she said.

"'Maybe a little soup?'

"'No.'

"'All the fish is gone?'

"'Yes. There's no food in the house.'

"At that time, Rav Chaim's home was open to all who needed anything. People wandered around his home as if it were their own, opening and closing cabinets and also the fridge and the pots. They ate whatever they could find. That's why there was nothing left for melaveh malkah.

"'Is there any challah left?' Rav Chaim asked.

"'Yes, there's a little challah left.'

"Rav Chaim was happy. 'Nu, that's just what I need for melaveh malkah — a little challah.'"

Focus

It's an astounding sight that one could see every day: Rav Chaim focused on his Gemara. He saw nothing else.

People came for his berachos, and to ask him for advice. They waited for him in his room, but he didn't know they were there. The room was filled with people. They talked to each other, and there was always noise. He didn't know anything about it. He is learning.

They looked, amazed. They quiet down, waiting for the moment he would notice them.

Sometimes, during the split second that it took him to turn the page, he lifted his eyes a little and saw them. Sometimes, he didn't see them until his grandson told him that there were people there who need his help.

As soon as he knew they were there, he smiled and welcomed them. He was sorry he didn't see them before.

Truly, his focus was amazing.

The Rebbe of Strikov offered a beautiful *mashal*.

Imagine extending your hand to greet someone, only to have him walk past without taking it. Few things are more painful than such a rejection.

During these precious days, Hakadosh Baruch Hu stretches out His hand to receive those who wish to return. He is **פּוֹשֵׂעַ יָדוֹ לְקַבֵּל שָׁוְים** as we recite during davening. He extends His hand to welcome every penitent.

Hashem is not asking us to perform the impossible. He is simply asking us to take His hand. He does not want us to make this journey alone, but rather wants to walk beside us.

When we allow Hashem to hold our hand, we become different people. We draw strength from His strength and courage from Him.

And so, as we enter the Yamim Noraim. We come holding out our hands toward the One Who is already reaching toward us. As the Pasuk says, קָרוֹב ה' לְכָל קֹרְאָיו, לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֻהוּ בֶּאֱמֶת —"Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (*Tehillim* 145:18).

May our Selichos rise before the Ribbono Shel Olam with compassion and favor.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



Rabbi Shalom Schwadron, of blessed memory, used to give a *drashah* every Friday night.

One Friday night, as he was on his way to the *drashah*, he overheard two fellows talking. One said, "Come to Schwadron! Come to Schwadron! Come to Schwadron!"

The other replied, "Forget it! I've already heard the same thing twenty times. I know exactly what he's going to say."

Sure enough, he came into the *drashah*, and Rabbi Shalom Schwadron was in the middle of speaking. He noticed these two men among the audience and said:

"*Rabbosai*, you know, there was once a terrible traffic jam on the road. There was a huge gathering of cars, and one fellow sitting in the middle of it decided to take a little rest. He pulled out a

newspaper, rolled himself a cigarette, lit it, and started smoking and reading.

Everybody behind him started honking.

"He sat there and wouldn't budge.... steady honking turned into loud angry blasts... but still the driver did not react. He remained completely absorbed in his activities.

"Eventually, the cars started honking from every direction. He got out and said, 'Guys, I've already heard this twenty times! Why are you honking so much? I've heard it twenty times already! Twenty times is enough!'

"The other driver looked at him and said, 'What do you mean, twenty times? Give yourself a shake! You're the one standing right in the middle of the road! What do you mean, twenty times? Move yourself!'

"That," Rabbi Schwadron said, "is the answer to the fellow who says, 'I've already heard this *drashah* twenty times.'

"Give yourself a shake! *Tachlis!* That is what it means when we hear the *shofar* again and again. But the message is: **Give yourself a shake! Wake yourself up! Move yourself!**"

R' Yisroel Meir Kagan (Chofetz Chaim) ZT'L would say:

'People think that a Berachah from a Tzaddik will make their children pious. But it requires more than a blessing. It requires effort and dedication!'

R' Dov Ber of Mezeritch ZT"L would say:

"During Elul, it's not so much my sins that worry me. For those, there is something called teshuvah. But whatever will be with my mitzvos? How well am I actually serving my Creator?"

The Stolen Shoes - R' Ari Neuwirth



I want to share with you a phenomenal story that I heard from Rabbi Frand. There's a man who lives in Baltimore, the Jewish community. His name is Harold Wilner. Harold Wilner was traveling from Boston to Vermont.

He's in the airport. This is post-9/11. He arrives at TSA. He puts his hand luggage on the conveyor belt, then takes the bin, removes his shoes, puts his shoes into the bin.

He comes to the other side of the screen, removes his hand luggage, looks into the bin, and to his chagrin and dismay and everyone's nightmare, he is missing his shoes. Not only is he missing his shoes, someone accidentally took his shoes and put their shoes, left their shoes. Now Harold is a size nine. These shoes were a size seven.

There was no way he could fit into these shoes. Now he needs to get to the other side of the airport, catch a flight to Vermont, and go through the whole airport in Vermont without shoes. Harold turns to the TSA agent. He tells him, someone took my shoes.

I don't have shoes. She says, don't worry about it. We'll give you a voucher. Go into any store in the airport, and you'll purchase for yourself a new pair of shoes.

Mr. Wilner says, I don't have time for that. I have a plane to catch. Who has time to go shopping now for shoes?

The woman behind him sees this. She feels bad for him. She says, sir, in my hand luggage, I have a pair of slippers. I use them when I'm on the plane to get comfortable. I have another pair of slippers in my luggage for when I arrive at my destination. I'll tell you what. Here are my slippers. She opens up the bag and she removes a pink pair of slippers. Now not only that, they have a thong, and the thong

separates the big toe and the smaller toes. He's thinking, pink slippers? But I have no choice. How else am I going to get through the airport, on the plane, and to Vermont?

I put on the pink shoes, the pink slippers.



So here he is, Harold wearing a *yarmulke*, a suit, a tie, and pink slippers running through the Boston airport.

He finally arrives at his gate, and to his dismay, he is going to go on a commuter plane. To go on the commuter plane, he had to exit the airport, go on the tarmac, and up a portable staircase to the plane. He's climbing and ascending the stairs, and as he's climbing the stairs, the pink slippers fall off. He has to go back down, retrieve the slippers, put them back on, and go up again.

Finally, exasperated, he sits down in his seat. The man next to him turns to him and says, sir, I want to tell you something. I observed the whole episode unfold from beginning to end. I must tell you, you are a credit to your nation.

He says, what are you talking about?

He says, not once did you yell. Not once did you scream. Not once did you curse. You kept your cool the entire time. - Who can do that? You're a credit to your nation.

Now that's a *Kiddush Hashem*. We have to set the example. And then, that's how we are *mekadesh Hashem*, we make *Hashem* holy.

Chutzpa! - R' Yitzchok Fingerer



There was a woman who was flying from *Tel Aviv* to America and she was famished. So before she goes on the plane, she had a little delay. So she went to the *makolet*, the grocery in the airport and she buys a bag of biscuits. She puts it down by a table, then she goes to the restroom, she comes back and there's hordes of people there, it's congested, it's packed.

So she ends up sitting opposite a guy, not that she wanted to, but she's sitting opposite a guy. She takes the bag that's there on the table of her biscuits, she puts her hand in and takes a biscuit out and starts eating it. And she can't believe she's watching as the guy across from her puts his hand in her bag and pulls a biscuit out also and eats it and munches on it. And she's thinking like what *chutzpah*! It's *mamash a chutzpah*! She figures okay, he did it once, I'll let him get away with one cookie.

She puts her hand in the bag, takes out another cookie and like monkey see, monkey do, he takes his hand in the bag and takes out a cookie and munches it and she's thinking and then the same thing repeats itself. She puts her hand to get her third cookie, he puts his hand in the bag to get a third cookie and by now there's only one cookie left and what does he do? He puts his hand in the bag while she is appalled. He breaks the cookie, takes half for himself and leaves half for her. He's like a generous crook.

She can't get over it, you know, if he wasn't a muscular guy and everything she would have slapped him and all, but she decided to leave it.

She gets on the plane, she's still steaming. She makes herself comfortable in the chair of the plane and she pulls out her bag and

what do you know, what does she find in her bag? A bag of biscuits! And she realized immediately that that bag of biscuits on the table in the lounge of the airport was not hers. She thought it was, but it was his.

And she realized how he shared the biscuits with her instead of accusing her, instead of lambasting her and lashing out at her.

What a lesson. And that's life. A lot of times we judge others, we think we know, and really we're the culprits. Really it's us.



Rabbi Jeremy Golker

Let me read you an unbelievable extract from the **לקט יושר**. The **לקט יושר** is a **תלמיד** of the **תרומת הדשן**, it's going back a long time.

'You know another reason why we start **סליחות** on a Sunday on a **מוצאי שבת**?

משום שהו סמוך לשבת, because we want to make it as close to **שבת** as possible. **וכל אדם נוהג ללמוד בשבת**, and a person learns on **שבת, משום שאין אדם עסוקים** because he hasn't got to go to work, so he's got plenty more time to learn. And therefore it's a good idea to start on a Sunday on a **מוצאי שבת**.

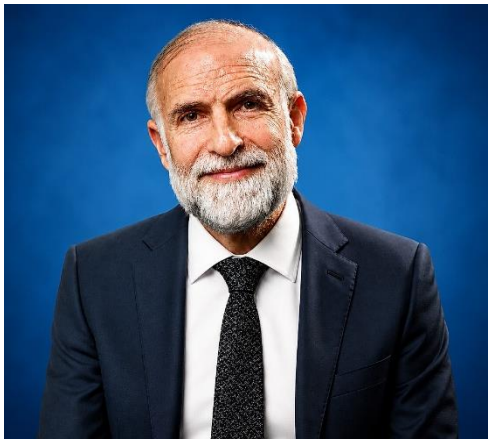
כי העם שמחים because people are in a good mood, they're in better spirits, **מחמת מצוות התורה שהם לומדים בשבת**, because they've spent more time learning on **שבת**, therefore in better spirits, **וגם מחמת עונג שבת**, they've also enjoyed the **שבת** delights.

Therefore we start **סליחות דוקא** on a **מוצאי שבת** because it should be out of **שמחה**, the **שמחה** of the **מצוה** of **שבת**, the **לימוד** and of **עונג שבת**.

וגם הפייט התחיל במוצאי מנוחה. That also is of course. Of course we make reference to the fact **מוצאי מנוחה**. Okay. So it shouldn't be anxiety inducing. On the contrary, a person goes in with a more upbeat positive spirit.

So the idea is, **נצבים וילך** is a prelude to **סליחות**. In fact, I once came across an amazing **גימטריא**. The **גימטריא** of the words **אתם נצבים היום**, and I checked it again this morning to be double sure, is 694, which is the same **גימטריא** as **לעמוד לסליחות**. So there's always a little hint in the first three words.

I Paid for His Extravagant Wedding - R' Yehuda Zev Klein



In the Musaf of Rosh Hashanah we say **כי זוכר כל הנשכחות אתה** because You remember all that is forgotten. What exactly does that mean? Can it be that Hashem only remembers what is forgotten? We say **ואין שכחה לפני כסא כבודך**. Hashem does not forget anything.

So the **Kedushas Levi** says something so profound.

כי זוכר כל הנשכחות אתה means that Hashem remembers what we choose to forget. So if a person performs a beautiful mitzvah, but instead of quietly moving on, he makes sure everyone knows about it. I was the one who bailed them out of bankruptcy. You think he can make such a fancy wedding? I paid the caterer. I got her daughter into school.

He remembers his mitzvah very well, and he makes sure the whole town remembers it too. Says the Kedushas Levi, when we remember our mitzvos, Hashem will forget them. But it works in the opposite direction as well.

If a person commits a sin, but instead of forgetting about what he did, he regrets it, he feels genuine remorse, and he tries to correct it. Then Hashem says, you are remembering it, you are taking responsibility for it, then I don't need to remember it anymore. I will forgive you, I'll forget your sins. That is the pshat **כי זוכר כל הנשכחות אתה**.

What we remember, Hashem chooses to forget. And what we forget, Hashem chooses to remember. What a powerful idea.

The holy tzaddik, **Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg**, said, when a person sins and later does teshuva, Hashem will forget the sin but he will remember the teshuva. How powerful.

We tend to do the opposite. We remember people's mistakes. We replay them in our mind constantly. We think about what they did wrong to us, and we allow one mistake to overshadow all the good they've done for us in the past.

But perhaps there's an important lesson here. If we choose to forget how others have wronged us, then middah k'neged middah, Hashem will choose to forget the wrongs we have committed against Him. If we are willing to say, I'm not going to hold this against you, I'm going to forgive you and move on, then Hashem will say the same about us.

I'm not going to hold on to your mistakes, I will forgive you and move on. And perhaps that is the message we need as we approach Rosh Hashanah, Yom HaZikaron, the day of remembrance. We stand before Hashem asking Him zachreinu l'chayim. We ask Him to remember us for good.

We want Him to remember our mitzvos, our acts of kindness, our Torah, Tefillah, and all the good we have done this past year. But we also have a responsibility to remember. We need to remember our own mistakes, to recognize them, to regret them, learn from them, and try to rectify them.

So as we approach Rosh Hashanah, we daven that Hashem will choose to remember us for good. May He remember our mitzvos. May He remember our willingness to come closer to Torah. May He remember the merits of our Avos. And may He forget all of our indiscretions and all of our mistakes.



Blessings Or Curses – You Choose!

The Chofetz Chaim was once overheard speaking to Hashem, "Master of the Universe, You have done so much for me already. I have written the Sefer Shmiras HaLashon. I have written the Mishneh Berura. What can I do for you?"

If we would have written the Mishneh Berura, most likely our attitude might have been, "Look, Hashem, I wrote the Mishneh Berura. I made Orach Chaim understandable! I resuscitated the mitzvah of Guarding One's Tongue. Now do something special for me."

The Chofetz Chaim looked at his achievements from a totally different perspective. He felt that it was a privilege for him to have been given the opportunity by Hashem to write these monumental sefarim. Now he wanted to know what he could do to show his appreciation to Hashem.

This is how we should feel when Hashem showers us with His blessings. (Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 3 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

The Pasuk says, "*When it happens that there come upon you… the blessing and the curse that I have set before you….You will return to Hashem and listen to His voice….*" (Devarim 30:1-2)

The pasuk says that BOTH the blessings and the curses will inspire the Jews to reflect on their actions and repent, bringing them closer to Hashem. It is logical that one who is undergoing much suffering often turns to pray to Hashem. The terrible things that are happening agitate him. The suffering motivates him to examine his ways, to repent and come closer to Hashem.

However, how do we understand how blessings can inspire one to do *teshuvah*, repentance?

The **Shach** (quoted in Talelei Oros by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin) explains that the contrast from the prior blessings to the present curses is what prompts the introspection leading to repentance. When the Jews are exiled, initially they will experience a period of blessing. That will be followed by a period of curses and suffering. The Jews will then understand that the curses only came because they didn't appreciate the blessings when they had them. The blessings corrupted them and caused them to abandon the Torah. Thus, the combination of the blessings and the curses served to bring the Jewish People closer to Hashem.

The **Shemen HaTov** gives a different explanation. The Shemen HaTov says that sometimes blessings, on their own, can be a reason for a person to repent. If everything is going so well, that should inspire a person to do teshuvah. A person should ask himself, "Why are things going so well? Is it because I am a righteous person or is it because Hashem is being very gracious to me. Maybe I should improve my ways."

When we stop and think about how much Hashem does for us, that strengthens our love for Hashem. We become so overwhelmed with love of Hashem that we <u>want</u> to to come closer to Hashem who showers such love on us. This makes us want to do teshuvah and improve our ways. Focusing on all the good, all the kindness and love that Hashem does shower upon us will also help us during the times that we are struggling with challenges.

The Shemen HaTov says that it is really up to us to decide what our motivation will be to repent. If one reacts amidst blessings and says that Hashem is so good to him that he must repay Hashem by being better and repenting, then he may be able to repent before ever having to suffer the curses.

We beseech Hashem that our "wake up call" come through kindness even when we are not behaving right and perhaps deserve to be punished.

We may be inspired to teshuvah through Blessing or Curse. We ask Hashem to use the method of Blessing. Hopefully that will suffice to help us to achieve proper repentance.

R' Simcha Bunim of P'shischa *zt"l* would say:

וְאַתָּה תָּשׁוּב - Every single Jew has the capacity for doing *Teshuvah*. That is, everyone except for a person who lies.

A liar is someone who after telling untruths for so long comes to believe his own lies and does not even realize that what he's doing is wrong. As a result, a person who tells lies is doing himself a terrible injustice for he prevents himself from *Teshuvah*. It is surely a sin to deceive others, but it is pure *'shtus'* (folly) to deceive oneself."

The Halachic Ruling (The Rambam)

The Rambam codifies this absolute spiritual freedom and capacity in his Hilchos Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance, 5:1):

רְשׁוּת לְכָל אָדָם נְתוּנָה... אִם רָצָה לְהַטּוֹת עַצְמוֹ לְדֶרֶךְ טוֹבָה וְלִהְיוֹת צַדִּיק הָרְשׁוּת בְּיָדוֹ... *"Free will is granted to every person... If one wishes to turn oneself toward the good path and be a Tzaddik (righteous person), the power is in their hands..."*

He emphasizes later (7:6) that Teshuvah brings a person instantly close to Hashem, regardless of their past: *"Yesterday this person was hated by Hashem, disgusted, far away, and an abomination... and today they are beloved, desirable, close, and a friend."*

The Vilna Gaon zt"l says that we must remember the kindness that someone did for us. When we pay back the favour we are doing more than being nice. We are fulfilling a Torah obligation!



Why Daven? Hashem Does Everything for the Good

The Tur writes in Hilchos Rosh Hashanah that whoever increases their tefillah during these days earns tremendous zechusim. Since the thirteen middos of rachamim shine during Elul and the Yamim Noraim, Klal Yisrael intensifies its prayers.

Sephardim begin selichos from Rosh Chodesh Elul, while Ashkenazim start closer to Rosh Hashanah — yet all recite *L'Dovid Hashem Ori*, which mentions Hashem's name thirteen times, drawing the thirteen middos upon us, as explained by the Chida and Siddur Reb Shabsi.

During these days, many add personal tefillos — extra tehillim, or even completing the entire sefer daily. Though the methods differ, the goal is the same: **to reach out to Hashem with greater intensity**. But a common question arises: if Hashem runs everything and we trust Him completely, why daven at all?

The Chasam Sofer, quoting the **Chovos HaLevavos**, notes that ancient philosophers argued that prayer contradicts bitachon. If Hashem already does what's best, why ask?

The Chasam Sofer answers: we daven because the Avos davened, and we follow their legacy. This is why Shemoneh Esrei begins with the brachah of the Avos — to remind us that even those who embodied perfect emunah constantly prayed.

He then explains *why* Hashem wants our tefillos. He compares it to a father hiding a treat so his child will call out to him. The father isn't withholding; he's creating connection. So too, Hashem desires closeness with us. When a Jew davens, a new bond is formed — a relationship powerful enough to tear up harsh decrees and bring brachah even when we may not be deserving.

The Chasam Sofer adds a third foundation: Hashem's request for our tefillos shows how precious we are. The King of kings says, "I want to hear your voice." Realizing this should fill us with chizuk and joy — knowing that Hashem values what *I* say and waits for my tefillah.



לְדָוִד ה׳ אוֹרִי

From Elul through Shmini Atzeres, we say Psalm 27, **לְדָוִד ה׳ אוֹרִי**. The last line says, קַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ חֲזַק וְיַאֲמֵץ לִבֶּךָ וְקַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ - ***"Hope to Hashem, be strong and strengthen your heart, and hope to Hashem."***

The Ibn Ezra explains that it doesn't mean YOU strengthen your heart. Rather, when you 'chazak,' strengthen yourself in Torah and mitzvos, then 'v'yaametz,' Hashem will strengthen your heart, and you will be able to continue hoping to Him and seeing success.



Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita -The Final Shabbos of the Year

Rabbosai, we are now **ערב שבת**, the last Shabbos of the year, and the final opportunity to connect to the **ימי רצון**. Elul has gone by quickly, but there is still time, **בעזרת השם**, to make this year a year of **עלייה**.

This is also the Shabbos before **סליחות**. The **פייטן** says: **במוצאי מנוחה קדמנוך תחילה**—at the conclusion of **מנוחה**, we approach the Ribono Shel Olam first. Why is Shabbos called **מנוחה**?

One important yesod is that **תשובה** requires **מנוחת הנפש**. A person needs to stop the whirlwind of the world, think carefully, and examine himself meaningfully. If we make decisions out of anxiety or haphazardly, without a proper process, they often do not last. Shabbos gives us the opportunity to find that **מנוחה** and make a purposeful plan for the year ahead.

There is another yesod, brought by the **לקט יושר**, the talmid of the **תרומת הדשן**. He explains that **סליחות** begins on **מוצאי שבת** because

Shabbos is a day of **שמחה של מצוה**. A person learns more, experiences **עונג שבת**, and feels elevated. And, as he says, **אין השכינה שורה אלא מתוך שמחה**—the Shechinah rests only through simchah.

This is particularly important when approaching **תשובה**. We must not come **מתוך ייאוש** or despair, but **מתוך שמחה, אמונה**, and a positive outlook. We should want to become better, and believe that we can become better.

The **פזמון** continues: "**חלים כמבכירה ... זוחלים ורועדים מיום בואך.**" We tremble before the **יום הדין**, like a woman facing the birth of her first child.

Why **דווקא מבכירה**? We would have expected an analogy to a person standing before a judge.

I once heard a very important yesod from **ר' מתתיהו זכרונו לברכה**. We often think of **ראש השנה** as a day when the Ribono Shel Olam examines our **מעשים** and decides whether we deserve punishment. But that is only one aspect of **ראש השנה**.

It is also the day when the Ribono Shel Olam gives a new **חלוקה** of **ברכה** and **השפעה**. He decides where to give **ישועה, חיים**, and **ברכה**. And we know from Chazal that **שרה, חנה**, and **יוסף** were all **נפקד** on **ראש השנה**. It is a time when a person can receive a yeshuah that he could not achieve at any other time of the year.

That is the analogy of **מבכירה**. A woman facing her first childbirth is certainly anxious, but she is also facing the greatest opportunity of her life. She is about to become a mother. It is a new beginning, filled with **שמחה, תכלית**, and **סיפוק**.

That is how we should approach **ראש השנה**. Yes, there is **דין**, but there is also the opportunity for a new beginning, for **ברכה, ישועה**, and **רחמים**.

And perhaps there is another remez in **מבכירה**: when a woman is facing her first childbirth, she is completely overtaken by the

situation. Nothing else is relevant. She is focused entirely on what is in front of her.

That is how **כלל ישראל** should approach **ראש השנה**. The Ribono Shel Olam is **מלך**, and we are preparing ourselves to stand before Him. We need to approach the day **מתוך מנוחה, מתוך שמחה**, and **מתוך** a positive outlook, with a desire to become different people in our connection to **עבודת השם**.

May we be zocheh, **בעזרת השם**, to a **גוואלדיגע שנה** of **ברכה, ישועה**, and **רחמים**.

גוט שבת, and a meaningful, **תכליתדיגע** preparation for **ראש השנה**.

Short Stories and Inspiration

R' Matisyahu Salomon ztl was busy from morning until night, and people had to make appointments even very early in the morning, just to meet with him

One morning, right before a meeting, R' Matisyahu said that he first needed to take care of something. He went to the kitchen and prepared an egg, two slices of bread, a hot drink, a beautifully peeled orange, and even a folded napkin for his wife, the Rebbetzin.

When he saw the surprised look on his talmid's face, he said, "The Mashgiach needs to wear different types of hats. Sometimes he's a fireman, a policeman, a therapist, and sometimes he must wear a chef's hat! The Rebbetzin isn't feeling well. My daughter is supposed to come in 45 minutes - why should she have to wait that long? I'm going to bring this up to her now, and I'll be back down soon."

What's the lesson? Sometimes life gives us a comfortable hat to wear, and sometimes we have to wear a hat for the bumpy times. But the main thing is to remember that IT'S OKAY, and it will BE OKAY! Trust Hashem that in the end, everything will work out exactly the way it's meant to be BEST for YOU!

This connects to this week's parshah:

We learn that, "It will be when all the things come to you, the blessings and the curses... and you should take it to your heart."

Life has all different types of situations, and all of them can be used to help a person grow! Even moments that feel like a curse can be used to become more humble, kinder, and a nicer person who feels and cares for others. But this will only happen if we take it to heart and realize we must think about how we can grow from it! (Based on R' Yonason Eibeshitz ztl)



אלול ראשי תיבות אני לדודי ודודי לי, but there's another **פסוק** in Shir Hashirim - **דודי לי ואני לו הרועה בשושנים**

הרועה בשושנים, who shepherds with flowers, with roses. What does it mean to shepherd with roses?

הגאון רבי משה סולובייצ'יק זצ"ל explains, there are different ways of shepherding the flock. You have a **רועה במקל**, he has a sheep's staff, and if the sheep veer off the path, he hits the sheep. You have a **רועה בקול** with a booming voice, if the sheep start following an errant path, he calls them to return. There's a **רועה בכלב**, there's a sheep dog that runs after the sheep and nips them to get back in line. But then there's the **רועה בשושנים**. The fragrance of those flowers is so intoxicating that they never veer from the path. And if they do, they come running back.

We need to become outstanding in **רועה בשושנים**. - **דודי לי ואני לו**.

I'll give you an example of a **רועה בשושנים**. There's a beach in **חיפה** that had a section called **חוף נפרד**, separate swimming different times for the men and the women. Everybody was happy except for the the director, the one in charge of the beach. He liked **גריל מעורב**, he liked **חוף מעורב**.

He's a very unhappy camper. But one time, he sees the **יידישע קינדער**, and he tells them, "**אני אוהב אתכם**, I love you, **אני רוצה להיות כמוכם**, I want to be like you." - They look at him like he lost his mind.

"**אני רוצה להראות לכם משהו**, I want to show you something." And he pulls out his **ציצית**. So one of the cute kids says, "**מה התחלת עם ציצית?** What are you with the **ציצית**?" They know he didn't like religion.

"Yesterday, there was a traffic jam, a big accident and I arrived at the beach very late. And in **חיפה** the word spread, it's a free swim day at the beach. It costs 50 **שקלים** to go to the beach. The whole city showed up. They all went swimming for free. By the time I arrived, it was time for the **חוף נפרד**. I saw hundreds of boys in their bathing suits, lined up. They would not walk into the water. They remained on the sand. They wouldn't go swimming unless they paid.

I said, 'I want to be like that.'" That's **רועה בשושנים**. That's taking an **אחריות** to make a **קידוש השם**.

The concept of **קידוש השם**, in a nutshell, is **שתהא שם שמים מתאהב על ידך**. Live a life where the name of **השם** becomes beloved. These children, by acting in such a **מענטשלאכע** way and ignoring the opportunity to swim for free, but refusing to enter the water until they paid, were **רועה בשושנים**. They took a **ייד** that was callously indifferent to **יידישקייט**, and had him put on **ציצית**.

They didn't preach, they taught by example. The **יסוד** of this **תקופה** is we collectively have to be **רועה בשושנים**. We must shepherd other **יידן** and draw them **תחת כנפי השכינה**. - **שתהא שם שמים מתאהב על ידך**. That's the ultimate **קידוש השם**, by living a life of **רועה בשושנים**.

One year, when they announced Rosh Chodesh Elul, the Chofetz Chaim was so overcome with awe and trepidation for the coming days that he fainted. When they revived him, he said, "It's no wonder they don't announce Rosh Chodesh Tishrei. Then EVERYONE would faint!"

