

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

אבינו מלכנו הננו ועננו כי אין בנו מעשים עשה עמנו צדקה וחסד והשיענו ... (תפילת אבינו מלכנו)

Although the *mitzvah* of *Teshuva* can be done at any time of the year, the practice is most associated with *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* - the Ten Days of Repentance. The **Rambam** writes in *Mishneh Torah (Hil Teshuvah 2:6)*, that *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* is an auspicious time for repentance: “*Although repentance and prayer are always effective, they are even more effective during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah when they are accepted immediately.*”

One of the most powerful *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and *Yom Kippur* experiences in *Yeshivas Knesses Chizkiyahu* in *Kfar Chassidim*, was recounted by *talmidim* decades later. They would recall with awe the manner in which the famed *Mashgiach*, **R’ Dov Yaffa ז”ל**, would deliver *mussar shmuessin* all throughout *Elul* at random times of day. The *bochurim* would all be learning in the middle of second *sefer*, and suddenly R’ Dov would walk up onto the *bima* and begin to speak. Sometimes he would talk for a while - an hour or longer - and other times, it would be a short 4 or 5 minute *shmuess*. The *bochurim* would refer to these short *shmuessin* as “מבוקסים” or little bursts, flashes of inspiration, when R’ Dov would recite a thought that just came to him and he felt like passing it on to the *talmidim*. It was not unusual for the *Mashgiach* to stand up late at night and deliver either a half-hour or five-minute *shmuess*. Nobody wanted to leave the *Beis Medrash* for any prolonged period of time for fear of missing one of the *Mashgiach’s* mighty “flashes” which he gave with humility and sincerity.

One year, however, there were no *shmuessin*. Not even the regularly scheduled discourses were delivered. The *talmidim* waited with great anticipation, yearning to hear words of *chizuk* that would allow them to rise and grow in their *avodas Hashem*, but there were none forthcoming. No one could understand what had happened and why the entire month of *Elul* had passed without even a single *shmuess* from the *Mashgiach*. Naturally, a few high-ranking students and married men approached the *Mashgiach* tepidly and asked why he was not following his usual practice at this time of year, but he refused to answer them or he simply shrugged. Many of the *talmidim* were disappointed - this was truly a highlight of the year in *Kfar Chassidim*, and without the *Mashgiach’s* heartfelt words of encouragement and inspiration, how were they to face the *Yom Hadin* and subsequent days of *Teshuvah* and repentance, knowing they were lacking?

Three days before *Yom Kippur*, as the *talmidim* were preparing to *daven Mincha* in the afternoon, the *Mashgiach* suddenly stood up from his seat and with slow, halting strides, walked up to the platform in front of the *Aron Hakodesh*. A hushed stillness quickly descended on the *Beis Medrash* and everyone strained to hear the softly spoken words as they emanated from the *Mashgiach’s* holy mouth: “Many people have come over to me wondering why I have not been delivering any lectures or *shmuessin* this year. The entire *Elul* has gone by and we are now three days before *Yom Kippur* You should know that I generally do not prepare any of the thoughts that I present to you, rather I feel a certain inspiration which enters my heart - thoughts and concepts that I feel can inspire and strengthen the *talmidim*, and I immediately stand up and deliver them to you ... Especially during *Elul*, this would happen on numerous occasions, and I truly believe that these lectures are words that *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* places in my heart and mouth for your benefit ... In truth, I too was wondering why this year, *Hashem* did not place any such words into my heart, words of *mussar* to give over to the public, and since there were no words to deliver, there were no *shmuessin* to give ... It is likely to be possible that you are simply not worthy of hearing such words, and it is not the *ratzon Hashem* for you to experience lectures of *mussar* ... so now that there are literally three days before *Yom Kippur*, it behooves you all to do real *Teshuvah* so that the Almighty can find a way to forgive you ...”

With that, he walked back to his place. The *talmidim* were shell-shocked! A real terror and trembling could be felt from that moment on. His short words pierced their young hearts - more than 100 *shmuessin* could ever have done. The next three days and *Yom Kippur* contained the most powerful expressions of *Teshuvah* ever displayed in the *yeshivah* for years to come!

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקדך ... (השעך י-ב)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTARAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

Hoshea HaNavi opens the *Haftorah* of *Shabbos Shuva* with a beautiful message to *Klal Yisroel*. “*Shuva Yisroel!*” The Jewish people can indeed return to *Hashem* and repent their sins. But after a *Yom Tov* like *Rosh Hashanah*, when Jews all over the world spend the better part of two days steeped in prayer, is there truly any doubt to the potential for them to do *teshuva* and return to *Hashem*?

R’ Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky ז”ל (Kehillas Yaakov) remarks that indeed one should never doubt the ability of each member of *Klal Yisroel* to return to the proper path of *Torah* and *mitzvos*. In fact, even those who have spent their time engaged in sin should never think that his cumulative sins might overshadow the few good deeds that he had done.

The **Steipler** explains that since Jews are required to learn the entire *Torah* and all its accompanying parts, one can easily begin to believe the fallacy that if he cannot achieve full and total perfection in his *avodas Hashem*, he should rather give up. On the contrary, because Jews must strive to achieve it all, every little bit that we do is laudable. When a Jew performs a *mitzvah*, he is in actuality inching his way closer to perfection and for that alone he is to be commended.

While this ideal may be hard to maintain, indeed after the inspiration of *Rosh Hashanah* leading up to *Yom Kippur*, it behooves us to strive for betterment and continue performing *mitzvos* and advancing ourselves in service to the Almighty. In this *zechus*, may we all merit a *Gmar Chasima Tova*.

ויקח משה וידבר את הדברים האלה אל כל ישראל (מא-א)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT”L

מחשבת הלב

The *Torah* closes the final chapters of *Moshe Rabbeinu’s* life with the words: “*And Moshe went.*” Where did Moshe go? The **Seforno** and **Ramban** both comment and say that *Moshe Rabbeinu* went to the Jewish people, either to comfort them on his imminently expected passing, or to ask for their permission to leave them. Now, we would think that on the last day of his life, Moshe would be totally immersed in *Torah*, *Tefillah*, *Prishus*, etc. Yet, the quintessential leader of our Nation, saw no greater endeavor to busy himself with at this time, than to be *mechazek* his fellow brethren. In fact, the “book-ends” of Moshe’s life as documented in the *Torah*, are his interactions with people and aiding *Klal Yisroel*. In *Sefer Shemos*, all throughout the *shibud Mitzrayim* and now, with his parting words of comfort and *chizuk*. His legacy was our paradigm leader.

As we stand now in the days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, this idea is truly something to bear in mind to enable us to be *zoche badin*. **R’ Yisroel Salanter ז”ל** taught that one of the greatest *segulos* through which to earn inscription in the *sefer hachaim* is to be one who benefits others. Thus, he is judged, not on his own, but rather by how much he is needed by others.

I saw the following *pshtat* which complements this *machshava*. We generally do not mention personal *bakashos*, supplications, on *Shabbos*. So it begs the question - how are we permitted to say “זכרנו לחיים” on *Shabbos Shuva*?

The **Sifsei Tzaddik** answers, that the sad fate of the wicked רשעים was already sealed on *Rosh Hashana*. For them it’s *mamash pikuach nefesh!* So we, their fellow brethren, beseech *Hashem* on their behalf, to have the *gezeirah* overturned! In this way, we display the *middah* of *Moshe Rabbeinu* which was to be “נשמה בעול חבריו”. And just as we all try our utmost to be *mechazek others, and benefit them, so too, may ה' הקב"ה* with us *מסיב* with us and grant us all a *Gmar chasima tova b’sifran shel Tzaddikim!*

משל למה הדבר דומה

בי כיום הזה יכפר עליכם למועד אתכם מכל חטאתיכם ... (ויקרא מז-ל) **משל**: Russia is known for its long brutal winters and the excessive amount of snow it receives during that time. Today, Moscow employs close to 20,000 workers with over 6,000 vehicles, including plows and “Golden Claws” - wheeled vehicles, that scoop up piles of snow and toss them into trucks. Some of the snow is dumped into the Moscow River, while the vast majority of it is taken to melting stations that can handle 12,000 truck-loads of snow a day.

Such is the process today. But back in the olden days, they had to come up with other ideas. During the communist regime when “everyone was equal,” Moscow had a special law on the books. Every citizen would have the privilege of cleaning “Mother Russia” by shoveling the snow in front of their own home. Failure to do so was subject to a hefty fine. Naturally, in good old Communist Russia, no one actually

listened. They would simply wait for the inspector to come around and then run out into the freezing cold holding a shovel in hand, as if they had been “working on it all day!”

During one particular heavy snowfall, as the inspector came around, one man decided it was simply too cold to pretend and he wasn’t venturing out of his home. It wasn’t long before he received a knock on his door and was handed a hefty fine. “Why am I different than the rest of the block,” the man complained. “No one else has cleaned on the block yet!”

“The difference is,” replied the inspector, “that at least they show they are trying, while you just simply sit inside and do not care about your own beloved Motherland!”

נמשל: **R’ Yechezkel Levenstein ז”ל (Ohr Yechezkel)** would repeat this story before *Yom Kippur* and say: “*Rabbosai*, even if you know from past experiences that you won’t really clean yourself up from the sins of the past completely, at the very least, show that you are trying!”

ואמר ביום ההוא הלא בני אין אליך בקרבי מצאני הרעות האלה ... (לא-א)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

The purpose of life is to be connected to *Hashem*. Every *aliya* and *yerida* (up and down) in a person’s life is connected to the attribute of *dveikus*. No matter what a Jew does, he is either attaching himself to *Hashem* or, if his action is not pleasing, detaching himself from *Hashem*. The most important thought that a Jew must have before he does any act is to determine if it will bring HIM closer or further from *Hashem*. The **Nesivos Sholom**, **R’ Sholom Noach Barzovsky ז”ל**, adds that in much the same manner, all the trials and tribulations in life are not necessarily a punishment for impure desires or thoughts of heresy, but rather the *yetzer hara* puts in front of a person all sorts of trials of both body and mind, until it appears as if from Heaven he is being pushed away from the source of life, and his prayers are not being heard because he has become unwanted in the eyes of Heaven. It is as if an iron wall has gone up between him and his Father in Heaven. This is the most difficult tribulation of all, and a Jew must employ every tactic of *kedusha* to strengthen his belief in *Hashem* even more.

“*As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I do not fear evil for You are with me.*” (תהלים כג) The understanding of any *nisayon* is to determine; if one’s *dveikus* to *Hashem* is permanent then this temporary trial will not break his bond; but if his closeness is only temporary, then any passing tribulation can easily separate him from His Creator.

The **Yesod V’shoresh H’avodah** quotes from the **Rambam** that all the negative incidents that occur to respectable and righteous individuals - prophets and the purest of *chassidim* - only come about at a time when the bond of *dveikus* is weakened or cut short, and only then, while he is separated from *Hashem*, is the evil able to affect him. However, at any time that the *dveikus* is strong and one feels a deep connection to *Hashem*, no evil is able to befall him. This is what *Teshuvah* accomplishes! May our *Teshuvah* be accepted and may we all be sealed for a wonderful year filled with all *Hashem’s* sweet blessings.