



נצבים-וילך

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Choose Life

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Part I. Living With Choice

Man Versus Roach

When we speak about the species called mankind, we understand right away that the outstanding feature that makes him superior to all of creation is his mind, his ability to reason. Left unfettered, without any incentive, without any initial input, a man's mind is able to develop the greatest theses, the greatest arguments, the greatest results; from logic. In all of the animal kingdom there's nothing as impressive as man's ability to think and reason and to make decisions.

Now, by no means am I saying that we are superior in all areas. Animals can do some things *instinctively* in a way superior to mankind. Did you ever encounter a roach, let's say, in the bathroom? You give him a whack with a newspaper and he falls down. It's all over you think. But as soon as you turn around, he darts swiftly away and he hides. So not

only does he bolt like an arrow but he's cunning; he plays dead to save his life.

Spider Versus Wasp

Or the spider; a spider builds webs that are feats of architecture, complicated edifices that engineers marvel at. I was watching at *minchah* here how a spider web in this window had caught a wasp. During *chazaras hashatz* I was distracted; I was watching the wasp. It was a very big insect and it was struggling like it never struggled before, rapidly beating its wings trying to escape. And the strings, the threads of the web, were so thin that from where I was standing I couldn't see a thing; it looked like the wasp was suspended in midair, on nothing. But the web was so built that it stood its ground.

It was remarkable to see the principles of engineering that the spider had employed so that these weak threads should not be pulled off from their bases or should not snap. They are spaced with such *chochmah*, with such design and

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structural wisdom that they are able to withstand an invasion by a very big insect and even the extremely strong force the insect exerts when he struggles to get free. And I saw the little spider sitting a little way off and watching how the wasp was struggling and then when he saw the wasp was becoming too active and the spider was afraid that the web might snap, he climbed down from his hiding place and injected a little poison to quieten down the wasp. Then he went back and he waited.

The Orphaned Spider

“What skills!” you’ll say, “What *chochmah*! What wisdom!”

But actually it’s not; it has nothing to do with the spider – he’s been pre-programmed. Let’s say he was an orphan. His father and mother were eaten up by a sparrow on the day he was born and he has nobody to train him. No parents, no trade schools, no employment training. No matter! That little spider has stored up in his tiny brain all the wisdom he needs to make a web. And he makes it just like his great-great grandfather did without even knowing that he had one.

So where did the spider get in his tiny brain the *chochmah* of making such an architectural accomplishment that engineers today study? Where did the roach learn to play dead and then to dart away exactly at the right time? It’s instinct. It’s *niflaos ha’Borei, chochmas Hashem*, and nothing more.

Uniquely Human

Man on the other hand wasn’t given these gifts; it takes many years of studying and training for a human being to learn the wisdom of architecture and engineering. And yet even though the spider has a leg up on us when it comes to that, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave mankind something that’s infinitely superior to those innate instincts. What is it? It’s the gift of free will.

The difference between animals and mankind is most markedly noticeable in the fact that we are

not pre-programmed robots. We were given that great gift of the ability to reason, the ability to use the mind in order to make choices. A spider can make the most ingenious spider webs but it can’t choose to do anything else. It’s on automatic pilot.

Man however can choose! Man, by means of his own reasoning, can choose to do or not to do, to think or not to think. Man can choose to become great or not to become great. And that’s what Hakadosh Baruch Hu says in this week’s *sedrah*: וְהַחַיִּים וְהַמּוֹת נִתְּנִי לְפָנֶיךָ – “I put before you life and death ..., וּבַחֲרָתָּ בַחַיִּים – and I want you to choose life” (Netzavim 30:19). Man can choose to live or not to live!

Now, to choose life doesn’t mean not to commit suicide. Life and death in the words of the Torah mean more than just saving your life or preserving you from death. וְהַחַיִּים means to *live forever*. You have the choice of becoming worthy of living forever. And וְהַמּוֹת – you have the other choice too. Death means not only to die in this world, but it means death forever and ever in the Next World.

The Mitzvah to Choose

And Hashem tells us what He wants: וּבַחֲרָתָּ בַחַיִּים – You should choose life. Rabbeinu Yonah in his Shaarei Teshuvah (3:17) says that some of the most fundamental principles of successful living are given to us in the forms of *mitzvas asei*. And he gives as an example, a prime example, this mitzvah of וּבַחֲרָתָּ בַחַיִּים. It’s a command that is unceasing, never-ending. To be alert; to keep your thoughts focused on choosing life. It’s a mitzvah that includes the whole life of a person because that’s what living means. Not that we should live like the spider, like a pre-programmed creature, waking and doing and eating and sleeping. No, no; וּבַחֲרָתָּ בַחַיִּים means to live with alertness, with awareness that every minute is an opportunity to choose to live successfully.

Now, once a person understands this, life becomes the most precious commodity. That’s why

when Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe Rabbeinu, הַן קָרְבוּ יְמֵיךָ לְמוֹת – Your days are close to die, so Moshe put up the biggest fight. He didn't want to die. ה' וְאַתְּחַנֵּן אֵלָּהּ – I entreated Hashem! 'Please, let me live longer and go into Eretz Yisroel. Even if I can't lead the people, don't take me out of this world yet.'

And when Hashem said, "No, your time is finished," Moshe was devastated; not just because he wanted to see Eretz Yisroel – because to live means the opportunity to choose, to choose life.

The Living Dead

That's why רְשָׁעִים בְּחַיֵּיהֶם קְרוּיִם מֵתִים – the wicked, even while they're alive, they're called 'dead' (Brachos 18). A *rasha* who is always responding to his base desires, his instincts, so he's not living with choice. He's living like a spider.

Even worse, it could be he's already so ingrained in wrong habits that many times he's not able to change anymore because Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes away his *bechirah*; like He did to Pharaoh. He made Pharaoh's heart heavy, so Pharaoh could not change anymore – he couldn't choose; the Rambam says that. He says that sometimes Hashem punishes a wicked person by taking away their free will and they remain *reshoim* forever. That's a terrible *onesh*; it's the same as death. רְשָׁעִים בְּחַיֵּיהֶם קְרוּיִם מֵתִים – they're dead while they're still alive because life is intended for choosing.

Litter on the Road

Now, this is a subject we should think about often because the awareness of what *bechirah* means opens up for us a whole boxful of opportunities. Once a person understands this great gift of *bechirah*, every moment of life is an opportunity to achieve diamonds! There's no end of choosing life for the one who is alert to this mitzvah. There are diamonds everywhere!

It's not a form of speech. We actually are traversing a road littered with rubies, emeralds, sapphires. And every one of them is more precious

than a block of apartment houses because you're choosing eternity – you're choosing to live forever.

Now, if you'll ask me for examples of these precious stones so I'll tell you that you have to keep coming here. That's what we talk about here in this place, about how to choose life. One of the stones is, as you're walking down the road you're thinking for one moment, "I remember from our great history that Hakadosh Baruch Hu took our forefathers out of Egypt and gave us freedom from bondage." In middle of the day – its not Pesach – it's an ordinary Wednesday. You're doing a mitzvah of the Torah, לִמְעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּלַיְמִי הַזֶּה. A real commandment of the Torah! In that one second it took to say these words or to think these words, you gained a most precious gift. You chose life!

Love and Diamonds

Another diamond: Let's say tomorrow you're sitting down to eat. Between bites you remind yourself of what you heard tonight and you'll think, "Why should I waste this one half minute?" And so you'll say as follows, "I love my people."

You know what you did now? You did what Hashem wanted to hear from you because He loves them too. אֵין הַקֶּב"ה אוֹהֵב אֶלֶּא לְמִי שְׂאוֹהֵב אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל – Hashem loves only those who loves His people! (Mesillas Yesharim, Ch. 19) "Oh," Hashem says, "What did I just hear from this man? He said he loves his people!" You picked up a diamond now! You chose life!

Why wait till tomorrow? Right here where you are, stop for a moment and say, "I love you Hashem." Right now, all together, everyone say, "I love You Hashem." That's a tremendous achievement in life! You can say it again and again and each time it's another precious diamond! And don't think it's an exaggeration! Life is full of diamonds! You don't have to waste a minute from choosing.

Driving Blind on Ocean Parkway

Oh, what a tragedy for those who don't know this! I look out my window on Motzei Shabbos, Saturday night, and I see cars rushing down Ocean Parkway. An endless line of cars are traveling to Manhattan; also an endless line of cars arriving from Manhattan to here. Where are they going? If there's something in one place, they'd all be traveling in one direction. But they're traveling in various directions

Some of them are choosing to go to the movies. How silly a choice it is! "I'll coop myself up in a movie where there's no fresh air and it costs money too and my eyes are feasting on garbage that never happened, on someone else's imagination." If people would only know what they're giving up when they choose movies; it's *mavess*, if you're Hungarian, it's the same word. They're not choosing life. They're choosing the other thing.

It's only that people are blind and they don't see the diamonds right in front of them. But if you would open your eyes you would see diamonds on the street, rubies, beautiful stones, precious stones. And as you walk on the street you say, "I love you, Hashem," or you say, "I love my nation, the Jewish people," you say, "I love the Torah," or you say, "I remember you took us out of Egypt."

Thousands of things you can choose to do. Daven to Hashem, "Hashem, guard me against *loshon hora*." Every moment of life is another opportunity. And as you say these words, as you think these thoughts, you're picking up diamonds. And the diamonds go into your mind; your mind becomes more valuable, more exquisite than it was before!

That's what life is but the world is blind. And therefore, Hashem said, "Take off the blinders. I put you into this world to accomplish. **הָרַחֵם וְהַמְּוֹת לְפָנַי** – *I put before you life and death*, **וּבְחַרְתָּ בְּחַיִּים** – *and I want you to choose life*." And not only I 'want'. I *commanded* you. You must constantly

choose to live for a purpose. It's called living in the present, understanding that every moment of your life you can be choosing life.

Part II. Reliving With Choice

Expanded Choice

I'm going to tell you a *chiddush* now, something that will expand this mitzvah of *bechirah* in directions that you would never have imagined. And if you'll take it seriously you'll see that the opportunities of *bechirah*, the diamonds on the road, are much more than what we said till now.

What's the expanded *bechirah* I'm talking about? It's called *bechirah l'mafreya*, retroactive choosing. It means that besides for picking up diamonds by living in the present, a person can choose to activate his free will "*l'mafreya*" – on things that already happened in the past.

You didn't know that? It's good you came tonight because it's a principle we can apply in many areas of life. It's not my *chiddush* by the way. Boruch Hashem, I had *rebbeim* in Slabodka who taught me this – they brought proofs, various proofs (*ed.*: See *sefer Lev Avigdor Shaar Habechirah*) – and I'm just sharing it with you so that you can utilize it to great benefit. Besides for activating the free will to live in the present, to make use of every minute of life, a person can also fulfill **וּבְחַרְתָּ בְּחַיִּים** for the past.

A Fight with the Sandak

It's a very important principle and let's see where it leads. I want to remind you about your *bris*. You were lying on the pillow on the knees of the *sandak* and the *mohel* started making preparations for your *bris*. Were you happy about it? Absolutely not. You were kicking and crying and the *mohel* told the *sandak*, "Hold on tightly to his legs!" And you, you poor little victim, you were screaming and fighting to get loose but your little toothpick legs couldn't do anything. If you could

have, you would have kicked the *mohel* in the face and run out of the *beis haknesses* to hide in the bushes somewhere.

So the question is, were you *mekayem* the mitzvah? You didn't choose that mitzvah; you did nothing. And that's a pity because you have to know the mitzvah of *milah* is so important that it's one of the two *mitzvos asei* in the Torah for which there's *kareis*. If a person refuses to let himself be *gemahled*, he's *chayav kareis*. And you didn't want it!

Such an important mitzvah and it's done *baal korchoch*, against your will?! Is that a way for a man to live? All his life to have on his record one of the most important *mitzvos* that he did not want to do?

It's a big question. Don't think it's a small question.

Reliving the Pain

The answer is what we're talking about now: *bechirah l'mafreya*. You hear that? It's not too late. Now is the time! Right now it doesn't hurt; it's easier. And because you have *seichel* now you can use it to choose. "Ah, I thank you Hashem! If I had to do it again now, I would do it gladly. I would tell the *mohel*, 'Go ahead.' I won't scream."

Now, it could be you *would* scream. You know, when they circumcise Russian boys – there are Jewish boys who come from Russia; they're big boys already, eighteen-year-old boys and they're not circumcised. So when they send the *mohel* down to do the *bris milah*, along with him they send six strong solid Lubavitchers. And their job is to hold him down!

So it could be that you might get cold feet. But at least you're saying it. "I won't scream. I wouldn't kick. I'd do it gladly, a big mitzvah like that, only once in a lifetime. I'm so happy."

Circumcising during Bentching

Now if you pay a little attention when you say *birkas hamazon* so you'll know that in the *brachah* of *אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' נֹדֵה לָהּ* we thank Hashem for a number of

things. You're sitting back now and you're burping; you're full, *boruch Hashem!* But before you come to thanking for the food, you say *עַל בְּרִיתְךָ שְׁחַתְמָתָּ בְּבָשָׂרֵנוּ* – I thank You Hashem for the bris that You stamped in our bodies.

Now here is a great opportunity to choose. As you're saying these words you're thinking: "I am happy that I had this mitzvah done on me. I'm sorry that I kicked and cried. I am *mekabel b'rotzon*, with my full goodwill, all that was done."

Everyone else is rushing through, but you stop for a half minute and you're imagining now how you're on the *sandak's* knees and they're getting you ready for the *milah*. And you say, "I'm willing to do it. I'm happy to do it. I thank you, *עַל בְּרִיתְךָ שְׁחַתְמָתָּ בְּבָשָׂרֵנוּ*." Of course it's not the same as choosing it beforehand, no, but there's something there. It's an opportunity. You're going to get a certain reward for your *bechirah l'mafreya*.

Now, the mitzvah of *milah* is just an example, a *mashal* of the opportunities life provides. Of course, if you're hearing this now for the first time so it might seem ridiculous to you. That's why you have to come here more often. It's a very big subject, this matter of utilizing certain things that happened already and going back and saying, "Yes, I am *maskim*, I accept it as if I was standing there and looking on."

Back to Slabodka

I'll tell you something private, how it applies to myself. You know, when I went to Slabodka, it wasn't really my choice. I remember, I had *chaveirim* and we were sitting somewhere in Manhattan outside of the yeshivah on the lawn and we were talking. My *chaveirim* said that they were going to Slabodka. "Come along with us," they said.

Now I was happy learning in the yeshivah here in America. I was learning well and I didn't want to leave. But they were good *chaveirim*, they were my *chaburah*, so I went along with them. *Baal korchi*, I

went along. I did not choose of my own free will to go to Slabodka! I got dragged along.

I look back now. What a *hatzlachah* it was for me! It was the highest point in my life! To learn in an old-time European yeshivah! The *ruach* I experienced in that yeshivah is not to be found anywhere today. Besides for the *milchemes haTorah* that went on day and night, there was also the *ruach hamussar*. There was a remarkable spirit of respect for our great *roshei yeshivah*, men with brilliant minds, teaching Slabodka *derachim*. Brilliant minds they had!

And all that, everything that I gained there and everything I became, was not because I chose to do it! It wasn't me! I should have chosen to go but I didn't have the *seichel*.

Now, is that the way to live? That one of the biggest benefits I received in life, whatever I achieved, it should be against my will? So I think about that often; I go back and say "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I'm so happy I went. Right now, sixty eight years later, I'm choosing to go."

Back to School

And that's an important lesson for everyone. Because here's a five-year-old little boy and they're taking him to the *cheder*. He's not happy with it. He wants to stay home with his mother. In *cheder*, sometimes there are rough boys and sometimes it's not so easy. Sometimes the *rebbe* might give you a little *potch* too. In my times, the *rebbes* gave *patch*.

He's not happy at all but what can he do? Nobody asked him. It's not his choice. He has to go. The mother wakes him up – and the mean father is coming home from shul soon – so he has to go to *cheder*.

Such a benefit was given to you – you were introduced to the world of Torah! – and you never were able to appreciate that great opportunity! Yes, of course, when you open a Gemara now, you have a *geshmak* in it. Even if not, at least you

understand that Torah is a big mitzvah. You're willing to learn. But at that time there was no *bechirah* at all. Your career in Torah was begun *baal korchoch* and that's how it remains all your life – unchanged.

So you have to go back now and say, "I'm so grateful to my parents that they forced me every morning to get up and go to *cheder*. I'm choosing now to accept, to be happy all those times when I wanted to sleep and they said, 'Nothing doing! You have to go to *cheder*!'"

It could be you're sixty years old now but you say it anyhow. That's *bechirah l'mafreya*. It's an especial perfection of the mind, to choose even in the past.

Abba! Potch Me Again!

When you grow up as an adult and you think of all the occasions when your parents scolded you, sometimes they slapped you, it wasn't with happiness that you received those reprimands and blows. But now you look back and you say, 'Baruch Hashem, I am grateful that that happened to me. Whatever they did was for my benefit.'

He wanted to make a *mentch* out of you. And it worked. To a certain extent you're a *mentch* – and a certain amount of credit goes to those *patch*. And so you should choose that right now. It's like you were standing there and telling your father, "Abba, Tatte, give me a *potch*. I deserve it." Imagine what a big *schar*. *L'mafreya*, you're choosing life.

And what if it wasn't your father; what if Hashem gave you a *potch*? If you ever had a fever in the past, let's say when you were a little boy, or a toothache once upon a time, look back now and note that it was good for you. *Yissurim memarkim*. Adversity, suffering is a benefit.

Now most people who are listening to these words, don't even think what it means. *Yissurim* are a benefit, they're a gift from heaven. A lot of sins, a lot of Gehenom is wiped away by means of troubles. Only at that time, you don't appreciate it.

To be *mekabel yissurim* willingly, that's a *madreigah* that is not easy for us regular people; most of us will never be able to do that beforehand, to ask for *yissurim*. But *chas v'shalom*, if it happened already, you didn't ask for it but it happened anyway? *B'dieved*, if you take upon yourself a willingness for what happened, in a certain sense, you get reward as if you did it. Absolutely.

Thanking for Tzaros

At least when it's all over so it's easier now to think about it; you can use your free will to look back and say “אֲדַרְךָ ה' כִּי אָנֹכֶנּוּ בִי – I thank you Hashem that you were angry at me” (Yeshayah 12:1). I thank You Hashem that You brought the difficulties upon me because difficulties change a person. Everybody gets better as a result of *yissurim*.

Some people become great *tzaddikim* because of the difficulties they encountered in life but even those who didn't become big *tzaddikim*, nobody becomes worse because of *yissurim*. And therefore if you have sense, you'll take tonight's words and think back to all the difficult times in your life and say, “I thank you Hashem for what you did for me.” That's also included in “choosing life”.

Now, I really would like to speak more about the subject – I have lots to say on it, lots of examples – but I'm afraid too much will seem ridiculous in the eyes of people who are not accustomed to it. But at least this we should know. As great of a subject *bechirah* is – and it's a very great subject, the opportunity to choose greatness and perfection – it's infinitely greater when you practice expanding *בְּחֵירוֹתָ בְּחַיִּים* into the past.

Part III. Living For Choice

A Fool and His Money...

In Mishlei (17:16) we read the following verse. It's a question but really it's a rhetorical question; we know the answer. לָמָּה זֶה מְחִיר בְּיַד בֶּסִיל – Why is it that money is in the hand of a fool? It means, what's

a fool doing with money? לְקַנּוֹת חֲכָמָה – The purpose of money is to buy wisdom; and this fool is going to waste it on nothing, on garbage. וְלֹב אֵין – He has no sense; or he's not making use of it at least, so why should he have the money?

If a little boy with no sense is walking around with money in his hand, it's a *mitzvah* for somebody to have pity on him and to take the money out of his hand. He should take away the money and take it home and give it to the boy's father because the fool is just going to waste it.

What is the money that a fool carries around in his hand? He has piled up in his hand wealth of years and months and days and hours. That's the real wealth. A young man is loaded down with capital. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent us into this world with money. Life is money! Life is wealth! Every day is wealth! Every hour is wealth! Every minute is wealth!

A young man of two, a young man of twenty, a young man of forty, a young man of sixty, a young man of eighty. As much as you have, it's a great wealth – it's the wealth of *וּבְחֵירוֹתָ בְּחַיִּים*. And not that every year is a great wealth; every *second* of life is a gem that is unequaled in value among all the treasures of the universe. Even in the Kimberly Diamond Mines in South Africa, you will never find a gem as precious as one second of life!

...Are Soon Parted

And therefore the *possuk* says, why should this wealth be in the hands of a fool? He doesn't have the sense to understand that's why he's given life. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is saying, ‘Why should he live? It's a waste of good days! He never learned that the purpose of life is to ‘choose life’ – every second again and again. I should waste such precious wealth on this *ksil*?’

And that means that we are obligated to always be considering in our minds, ‘Am I that fool? Am I spending the money of life the way the One Who gave me that life is looking for?’

You know how many people are bemused? Their minds are preoccupied with empty things; with the Yanks and the Mets, with politics and entertainment. You know how many people are wasting their lives pursuing after imaginary wealth instead of true wealth? And what of people who waste their lives pursuing imaginary pleasures? They're chasing imaginary dreams instead of the diamonds of living with choice.

Sane Fools

I know a fellow in the neighborhood who is a connoisseur of wines, of bourbons. He has a cabinet in his basement filled with all different types of wine. And he knows their names! Is that a man who is making use of his time, of his opportunity of *bechirah*?

There are people who are going around thinking how they're worried and they're angry, they're being persecuted, the injustices that others did to them and their lives are wasted away by silly and foolish imaginations of persecution. I know a man who walks around thinking about ways and means how to get even with his landlord. I'm not talking about lunatics. Sane people! But they're *ksilim*, they're fools. וְלֵב אֵין.

So you'll tell me that it can't be helped. You're bemused; you're distracted. No, don't say that. A man who realizes that this life is a golden opportunity of וּבְחִירַת בְּחִיִּים doesn't waste it by yielding to circumstances.

Ignoring the Roaches and Rats

Let's say, for some reason, they would let you into a big bank vault where they keep extra cash. They keep thousand dollar bills in big packages. Hundred thousand dollar bills in big packages! A lot of them, all over the place. There's no end of it. And let's say the president of the bank says, "You know, I'm going to let you into my bank vault in my bank just for one minute. And you can take all that you can. Whatever you can grab you can keep."

So you walk in and first thing you say is, "Oh, it's stuffy in here. I can't do anything in here! How can I work in here? It's so stuffy!" So you wait until he brings in a fan, and he makes it nice and comfortable for you, nice and convenient. Ohhh, now you're all ready to accomplish.

But now you see that the bank vault is full of spiders. It's full of roaches and rats. What are you going to do? Wait until the exterminator comes?! No, you'll dive in. You'll chase the rats off. You'll brush off the cockroaches or you'll pull out the bundles of thousands even with the cockroaches! Who cares?!

This world is too precious for being distracted and gloomy and lazy. In a world where you can find a thousand dollars every second, you can't afford to waste time saying, "Well, this thing upsets me, and this thing bothers me." Life is too precious to waste by being discouraged and downcast. You can't afford to be dispirited and despondent.

Thunder and Hail

All these things are for fools. Because then you'll wait till it's nice and convenient, which it will never be anyway. And you'll lose your opportunity. Life will just pass by, and that man will have to go into an insane asylum, and he'll have to wait till he recovers, and then when he's an old man, ready to die, they'll let him out and he'll just toddle off to the grave?!

So a man has to be strong enough of character to say, "I don't care what it is! It can thunder and it can hail, whatever it is, I'm just going to go about my business collecting the thousand-dollar bills. As many as I can grab, I'm going to grab."

And it's endless, the opportunities. Someone is hailing down on you mean words? You should think, "I'm not going to waste my character by sinking to this man's level and quarreling with him! On the contrary! I'm going to choose greatness right now! I'm going to fulfill וּבְחִירַת בְּחִיִּים by keeping quiet."

A woman, she's busy raising children. It's thundering in the house – the children are making noise like nobody's business. But she reminds herself about choosing success and she thinks, "Why should I be like my gentile neighbors, Mrs. O'Reilly or Mrs. Libertino, who are raising children primarily by instinct?" And so she chooses to add one little thought: "I'm raising a family to serve Hashem." When she nurses the baby and when she diapers the baby and she's cooking meals, always she's thinking "I'm doing the will of Hashem." That's how her housework, her raising children, becomes *avodas hakodesh!* It becomes the holiest kind of work, bringing up *tzaddikim*, future *tzaddikim*, *ovdei Hashem*.

Undercover Choosing

You can't sleep in the middle of the night sometimes? You are awake for a few minutes? Don't just roll yourself in bed in misery; remind yourself about our *chiddush*, *bechirah l'mafreya*, and think of ways to apply it. A person if he wants he can, in his mind, relive his *chasunah*. You can go back and get married *l'shem Shomayim*. You were too busy then; the gown and the place cards and the makeup. You forgot to think; you forgot to choose. So do it now.

Right now you can choose again. Think back to the day of the *chasunah*, and choose retroactively to get married *l'shem Shomayim*. "Hashem, I married my wife in order to serve You, to build a *frum* family, to raise a home of boys and girls who make *brachos* and *daven* and are *ovdei Hashem*. I married my wife, not because of romance. No, I married her because I wanted to build a home for You." Think these thoughts while you are lying in bed. On your bed, in the middle of the night; your family is fast asleep but you're fulfilling *בְּחִירַת בְּחַיִּים*. It's a tremendous achievement.

Playing the Bechirah Record

Now you have to know that we're talking tonight about how to prepare ourselves for Rosh

Hashanah. Because very soon will be the last day of the year; the end of the year is creeping up on us so now is the time to get started! You're already starting right because you came here tonight and we're talking about a very important subject. Very good. But you have to do something with it.

Because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to say when we ask Him, "*Ribono Shel Olam, kosveinu b'sefer hachaim*, write us into the book of life." Hashem will say, "I'm going to consult your record. How did you utilize your life until now? How did you live until now? You wasted your life? You want some more life to waste?" *לָמָּה זֶה מְחִיר בְּיַד בְּסִיל –* "Why should I give more money in the hands of the fool, *וְלֵב אֵין* – *who has no sense*.

The New Year's Resolution

And that, therefore, is a *kabbalah* for the new year. We should say, "*Ribono Shel Olam, I'm afraid that when I ask for chaim, You'll chalilah say, 'I already tried with you so many times. The purpose of life is to choose life and to choose life and to choose life again and again. That's why I give you life, for that purpose alone.'*" And so, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, my *kabbalah* for You is that I'm going to utilize the coming year. I'm going to fulfill this mitzvah of choosing life."

That's a *kabbalah* for *erev Rosh Hashanah*. Think about it as much as possible from now until Rosh Hashanah comes and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will see that this man means business. And just because of that, He'll bless you with more and more opportunities to continue making more and more progress. Because you understand how to utilize that great gift of life – *וּבְחִירַת בְּחַיִּים!*

"Oh," Hashem says, "this man wants to live for a purpose. This woman wants to live for a purpose. They understand that life is for choosing life. And if that's the case, I'm going to give him not only this year. I'll give him even more."

You know, sometimes there's a *gezar din* to live long lives on Rosh Hashanah. Sometimes on Rosh

Hashanah there's a *gezar din* for a person to live a very, very long life. But you can be *zocheh* to such a *gezar din* only when Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees that you surely mean business. If you're *mesupak*, you're wavering *ahin un aher*, so He might give you another year or so; not more. But if you make it a clear-cut *kabbalah* and you make up your mind, "That's my purpose in life. All my life I'm going to make use of that great gift of *bechirah* and I'm going to try and get better and better and make something out of myself; that's my purpose in life," so then Hashem sees that you're serious.

"If that's the case," Hashem says, "I'm going to inscribe you not only for *chaim* for this year. I'll inscribe you for very, very many long and happy and successful years."

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Choosing Life and Asking for Life

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, now is the time for me to clarify for myself what it means that I'll be asking for life. And so this week I will *bli neder* spend one minute every day preparing myself for a long life of correct choices. The first thirty seconds I'll think about how the half minute I'm living right now is the most precious of all gifts because I can choose greatness right now. And the second half minute I will choose to do something or think about something that is a diamond; demonstrating that I understand the value of choosing life.

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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." And we're thinking, "Hashem, remember us. All the members of our shul. All the people who come to our *shiurim*. Our wives. Our children. Our grandchildren. All the *nei 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 and *taharas hamishpachah*. 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. Much better. 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."
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