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RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

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ROSH HASHANAH

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ROSH HASHANAH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

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Part I. Rosh Hashanah Resolutions

Gift Bearing Beggars

When we come to Hashem on Rosh Hashana: כְּרָלִים וְכָרְשִׁים דִּפְקֵנוּ דְלִתֵּיךְ – we come knocking on Your door like beggars. That's what we say in our tefillos. We're not coming to give; we don't have anything to offer You, Hashem, and so we're here now to ask, to beg.

And yet, there's something misleading in those words because although that's true—there's nothing we can give to the King that He doesn't have—but even more true is that we dare not come like a beggar.

If you come empty handed to Hashem, you're taking a very big risk because the principle is שָׂאוּ מִנְחָה וּבֹאוּ לִפְנֵי – bring an offering, a gift, and come before Him. Only then, הִשְׁתַּחֲוּ לֵה' – can you bow down to Him, בְּהַדְרַת קוֹדֶשׁ – with the glory of sanctity (Divrei Hayomim I, 16:29). It means, "It's not

enough to bow down to Me and to acknowledge that I'm the Melech. If I'm a King—if you really mean it—then you'd show it by bringing something. Where is the tribute? To a King you have to bring something when you come."

You know, sometimes there's a very wealthy king and he doesn't need anything from his subjects. He has everything and your gifts don't add anything. Even your taxes are unnecessary for running the country. But no matter—you have to pay something anyhow to show you are loyal to the king. The tribute is a sign that you recognize him, that you know he's the boss and that your life, your future, is in his hands.

And so, you dare not come empty handed on Rosh Hashana. Yes, you knock on the door like a beggar because that's what you are—you're actually begging for your life during these days. But you must come with something in your hand anyhow.

Silencing the Accuser

After all, the satan is mekatreg; he accuses us on the basis of our past and he wishes therefore to deprive us of our future. 'Don't give them another chance.' That's his motto. And therefore one of our chief functions on Rosh Hashana is to convince Hakadosh Baruch Hu that we do have a future, that it pays to give us another chance.

And that's why on Rosh Hashana among the most important functions is to make kabalos—it means to take upon ourselves certain promises, certain plans for the ensuing year somewhat beyond what we were up till now.

"Bli neder, I'm going to be different this year in certain things, certain definite things." Whether it's in shalom bayis, your behavior towards your fellow man, in the way you daven, your ambitions to learn Torah, undertaking maasim tovim and new mitzvot, or more hiddur mitzvot; whatever it is, we intend to transform ourselves. And although it won't be a perfect transformation, but even a little bit is an achievement and the satan is quieted down.

Kabbalah for the Layman

That's why all the pious servants of Hashem always made kabalos during these days and they made plans, tachbulos, how to fulfill them. They used to write down their kabalos before Rosh Hashana so they shouldn't forget them as soon as the day was over. And then all throughout the year, until next Rosh Hashana, they would constantly remind themselves, "Remember what you wrote down, what you came to the King with. You have to stick to it because on the strength of this kabbalah you bargained with Hashem for health and life and success."

And as much as possible they would keep track of their progress throughout the year and then when Elul would come around again, they would take time to look over all the kabbalos of the last year and see, “How did I do? What could I have done more to fulfill my commitments to Hashem?”

Don't Be Mean

Just one example so you'll understand what I'm talking about. Let's say for instance you'll say, “This year I promise I'll never say a mean word to my wife.” ‘Bli neder’, say. But it should be clear cut: “This year, no matter how mean my wife is to me, and how much she'll bother me and criticize me and nag me, I won't say anything impolite to her. I'll keep my mouth closed.” Very good; an excellent kabbalah. And make sure you have a little notebook, a place to keep track, to make sure you're fulfilling your promise.

Of course, it's nothing compared with what you're supposed to do for Hashem. You're not supposed to say mean words to anybody. But at least bring one kabbalah: “Ribono Shel Olam this year I'll make it a principle bli neder I won't say any mean word to my wife.”

Women have to do that too. Her husband comes home tired from work. He needs encouragement, and instead you attack him with words when he comes home: “Why did you come so late? I have to work all day long by myself with the children. You don't help me at all,” and so on and so forth. “There's not enough money in the house. I want a maid. My neighbors have maids. I don't have a maid.” Or, “She has two maids and I only have one maid.” So make a kabbalah, “This year, for the first thirty minutes after my husband comes home from work, I won't say one bad word. Only ‘sugar and spice and everything nice.’”

Valuable Daisies

So you're coming now with a gift to Hashem—you're coming with some bargaining power. Of course, it's still **בְּרָלִים וְכֶרֶשִׁים**, like a poor beggar. Because it's like coming to ask a king that he should spare you your life—let's say you did a very big crime and you want him to spare your life—and you bring him a few daisies. You couldn't afford to buy flowers from a florist so you pick some dandelions by the road and you bring them to the palace.

Whatever you come with now is only dandelions, because even if you would come to Hashem with tremendous promises—“I'll give ten million dollars to Your Torah institutions” and you have it to give—it's a very big gift but it's nothing. It's merely a sign that you want to show Hashem some loyalty. That's all it is. Because compared to what He gave you, it's nothing at all. He gave you life. You never can pay for the great gift of life. All the happiness that you have, even by just walking around on the street, looking

at the blue sky, breathing the air, all the fun that life has, it's impossible to pay for it. So whatever you promise, all your resolutions, are **גְּדִלִים וְכִרְשִׁים**. It's even less than dandelions you picked on the road.

And yet, it's everything! You know that you're only a beggar but at least you're showing the King that you're bringing something to Him. And that's already a tremendous step, to approach Hakadosh Baruch Hu with a kabbalah, with something which we promise to do.

Keep it Simple

Of course, you won't pick too many things. You have to make a minimum, something that you'll be able to do. But at least something real, something practical. Just to make pie-in-the-sky promises, vague promises, that's nothing. No; it has to be something you can grab onto. **תִּפְסֶטָה מְרוּבָה לֹא תִפְסֶטָה** – If you try to grab too much at one time, you're going to grab nothing at all. It's all going to fall out of your hand. To say in general, “I'm going to be good this year,” is better than nothing, but not much better.

And therefore in order to make it easier—Rosh Hashanah is tomorrow night and so time is running out—we'll make now three suggestions; three clear cut resolutions for the entire year which are not difficult to do but which will bring guaranteed results. If you are ambitious, you can do all three. Maybe you'll say it's too much and you'll choose only two. But whatever you decide, stick to it. If you commit to practicing them up every day for the next year, that's already **שָׂאוּ מִנְחָה וּבָאוּ לִפְנֵינוּ** – at least you're coming before Him on Rosh Hashana with something.

Sheva Yipol Tzaddik V'Kam

Will you forget about them sometimes? Probably. A year is a long time. You might fall down. Could be Chol Hamoed Sukkos you'll be very busy; you'll forget. And there's winter and Chanukah and Purim and Pesach. And then the summer. It's a long year and nobody is perfect. But if you keep a small notebook and mark it down every day—check it off; did I do this and this and this?—that will help. And when you do forget or you weaken in your resolve, so you start fresh the next day.

Rav Nachman Breslover in one of his seforim relates that when he began his career as an oved Hashem, he fell down many times. Sometimes, a hundred times a day he fell down; but he wasn't discouraged. He got up and said, “This time I'm going to remain standing.” He fell again. Each time he rose again and fought back. And that's the career of all good people. They fall and they fall, but in the end they are going to conquer.

Kabbalah in Secret

Now, before we start, one important introduction, a warning: Don't tell this to anybody; don't tell anyone about your program. That's the advice of Shlomo Hamelech. בְּאָזְנֵי כְסִיל אַל תִּדְבֹּר – Do not speak in the ears of a fool; and most people are fools. Why shouldn't you tell him? כִּי יִבְזֶה לְשׁוֹכֵל מְלִיד – He'll make your words into nothing (Mishlei 23:9).

Now it could be he'll even belittle it—"Oh, it's nothing. It's nothing. It's devarim beteilim. You're wasting time talking about these subjects." Yes, you'll find people like that. He'll say poo poo and the whole thing is exploded. But even if he won't say one word, but you'll look at his face—a dead pan face. He's not interested. So you get cooled off. You hear that? You're cooled off by him lacking the reaction. You see he's not really interested, that he's not impressed, and you yourself lose your interest in what you have to say. That's an important principle—keep your kabbalos hidden, even from good people.

You know, the great sage Rav Simcha Zissel who lived about eighty years ago had the practice that when it occurred to him some important Torah idea, some new thought of avodas Hashem entered his mind, so for a long time he didn't tell it to anyone. Even to his disciples in the yeshivah he didn't say anything. He kept to himself; he thought about it, practiced it, developed it, and only later he told his talmidim. And he explained that by telling it to others it loses its effectiveness on you.

A Matter of Degrees

Now, when he spoke in the yeshiva he was speaking to very good talmidim. His disciples were great men, talmidei chachamim, lamdanim. But still when he spoke to them and he would tell them his new thought that he was inspired with, they didn't understand it with the same enthusiasm that he understood it. So let's say he was inspired 98 degrees Fahrenheit; he would tell it to them and they'd be inspired 55 degrees. And that would cool him off. Human beings are like that. We're weak like that.

Even when I speak to you, the thing that I have in my mind is not reflected in your mind entirely—it's only partly reflected—and your face shows that it's not reflected fully. So I'm cooled off. Only that you came here already so I won't disappoint you. I lose out by telling it to you but sometimes you can't help yourself. After all you're a teacher, you're a parent; you must tell others. But even so, at the beginning try to hold it as long as you can and suck out all the inspiration you can get out of it before you tell it to them.

And therefore when it comes to our program for the coming year, we say יְהִי לְךָ לְבָרָךְ – It should be for you alone, וְאַיִן לְזָרִים אֲתָךְ – and strangers should not share it with you (ibid. 5:17). You want to remain inspired? You want to keep this enthusiasm that you have now in the beginning of the year?

You want to become better with three kabbalos and keep it up till next year? So יְהִי לְךָ לְבָרָךְ – keep it to yourself. By yourself you'll achieve greatness and perfection.

Part II. Two Resolutions

The Forgotten Subject

Now what are our kabbalos?

Number one is Olam Haba. We're going to accept upon ourselves, bli neder, that every day this year we will spend thirty seconds thinking about Olam Haba. A half minute on the clock, every day, I'll think about Olam Haba.

Now, a person hears such a thing and right away he's in a panic. Thirty seconds? What am I going to think about for thirty seconds?

Because today the Am Yisroel has forgotten about this greatest of all subjects. It's relegated to a levayah, a shiva home. But on a regular day, in a regular Jewish home, it's not discussed.

Listen in to a woman on the telephone. A half-hour she's talking, how she had to go all over Manhattan to find a winter coat, how she's having trouble with her maid, and this and that. All Olam Hazehdige things. But Olam Haba? Silence. Not a word.

Now, I don't mean to say anything especially about women because it's the same thing by the men. Here's a Shabbos table, a frum table; what's the conversation at the Shabbos table in a frum home? Divrei Torah, yes. Vertlach, very good. But ha'ikar chaser min hasefer! Olam Haba! The main course is missing.

Sobering Up

After all, what is it all about? Why are we in this world? We're here just to live? And even to do mitzvos?! Everybody who learns knows that שָׂכָר מְצוּהָ שָׂכָר מְצוּהָ – there's no payment for a mitzvah in this world (Kiddushin 39b). You're not working for anything in this world—it's Olam Haba, that's the great joy we're all aiming for. Only that nobody thinks about it! It's not even mentioned; days and days pass by as if it doesn't exist.

The Chovos Halevavos says, “Oy l'shikrus hazos – alas for this intoxication.” Alas that people lose sight of that great fact; that this world is only a preparation for the World to Come. And it's so important that we have to understand it as one of the number one requirements for being a Jew. And don't say you knew it already when you were a little boy. You never knew it. Even now you don't know it. The intoxicated nation must sober up!

Living in Eternity

And so this year, starting today, we're going to spend thirty seconds every day reminding ourselves that we're in this world only as a preparation for the World to Come. הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה דוֹמָה לְפָרוֹזְדוֹר – This world is just a vestibule, לְפָנֵי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא – before the World to Come, and therefore הַתְקַן עַצְמְךָ בְּפָרוֹזְדוֹר – prepare yourself in the vestibule, in the lobby, בְּרֵי שְׂתַכְנֶנְךָ לְטָרְקְלִין – in order that you should enter the banquet hall (Avos 4:16).

Ooh, that's a big statement: This entire world that we're living in—your home, your street, your family, your work, your shul—it's only a hallway that you're passing through! And you have to continue to remind yourself of that as you walk in Olam Hazeh. It's only a little lobby, a prozdor before the traklin.

We have to get the idea in our heads. When somebody passes away and the relatives are all broken, his friends are all sad, but they should know that now he is in the world for which he was created. Up until now he was just preparing. Whatever happens here is only a preface to the great career that follows. Because there's a huge banquet hall that everyone enters from this lobby.

Olam Haba in the Subway

And so immediately, the first thing in our program, we're going to think about the World to Come—what it's like there, how we get there. That's where Avraham Avinu is. That's where all the tzaddikim are. Adam Harishon is there too and Chava. Moshe Rabbeinu is there. It's the place of greatest happiness. Wouldn't we want to be there?

And so, starting today every day for thirty seconds—on the clock—we're going to think about Olam Haba. We'll spend a half minute thinking about the World to Come—about its importance in our lives. One time every day.

So as you're hanging on a strap in the subway, you'll remind yourself, “Oh, I still have to fulfill today that kabbalah I made erev Rosh Hashana.” You look at your watch and start thinking about Olam Haba until thirty seconds pass. Keep your hand on your pocket, on your wallet meanwhile, because the one standing next to you, he's not thinking about Olam Haba.

Or as you're driving towards work, or you're waiting at the corner for the light to turn green, or you're waiting to see a customer—whatever it is—look at your watch and let it tick off thirty seconds while you are now in the World to Come; thinking about the purpose of life.

Welcome to Olam Haba!

That's number one. Isn't that easy? And results are guaranteed because you're already superior to everybody else. You are a מְרַבֵּה. You're one in

ten thousand. Who does that? You're a head taller than everybody else because you live every day for thirty seconds in the World to Come.

And not only are you fulfilling the first kabbalah—the first tribute to the King that you're coming into Rosh Hashanah with—but you know what's going to happen when you begin thinking like that? It will illuminate your life. It will give a simchah in your life. Because no matter what happens, you know you're headed towards success.

And one day, when we come into the Next World and they'll say “What do you want here?”, so you'll say, “Well, I worked on Olam Haba. I reminded myself every day about this place, about preparing to be here.”

“Oh then,” they say, “Shalom aleichem. We're happy to have you.”

Now whether they'll give you a front seat or a middle seat or a back seat, it depends how much you put into it. But they are going to welcome you—it's guaranteed.

Secret Kindness

Now we go on to number two, a second thing we will do every day as part of our program of **שְׂאוֹ מִנְחָה וּבֹאֵו לְפָנָיו**. Our second kabbalah for this coming year is every day to do one act of kindness that nobody knows about. Once a day, find a way to do a chessed in secret.

If you can, buy a cake of soap and drop it in the lavatory of your beis haknesses. Nobody should know about it. Just unwrap it, sneak in and put it down, and run out. A big chessed. I'm not telling you what you have to do. It's just an idea.

There was a man in our neighborhood like that. In secret he undertook to supply in his yeshiva every day, face-tissues. Nobody thinks where they come from; the yeshiva doesn't supply them. This man comes in secretly and puts them down. He buys them from his own money. For years and years he has been doing that—nobody knows about it.

When the Wife is Away

Or let's say you walk in the house and your wife is not home. There are some dishes that have to be washed. Wash a few dishes—one or two dishes—dry them and put them in their place. She shouldn't know. She comes home and she remembers there was a sink full of dishes but she doesn't notice that it's less. Don't tell her you washed them. Don't tell her. And that counts as your secret chessed for the day.

I once told this to a man and he said, this idea he doesn't like. All right. So there are other things you can do. Let's say you're walking in the house and you see something, a piece of dirt on the floor. You know your wife will

get busy; she's going to bring a broom and try to shovel it up. Kick it under the sofa, she shouldn't see it. She won't see it. It's saving her all that work.

You think it's a small thing? No, it's a good idea. Have in mind you're trying to save someone unnecessary work.

Chessed on Purpose

Now, don't do a good thing and later say, "Well, today I have to fulfill my kabbalah and so I'll use that retroactively." That's no good. To rely on bedieved, that good thing I did before, I'll count that? No. You have to say beforehand, "I'm going to do this in order to fulfill my promise I made erev Rosh Hashana—an act of kindness that nobody knows about."

Otherwise, everybody does kindness anyhow. But it's usually done out of habit or because we must. We usually do kindness to people because we're ashamed not to do it. If you're getting off the bus, you hold open the door for the man who is coming after you to get off, the door shouldn't slam in his face, because you'd be ashamed not to hold the door open for him. He'll look at you like an uncivilized person.

No; gemilus chassadim that you do to satisfy the requirements of civilization, that's not our program. It's good but it's not our kabbalah. We're doing it for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. You have to do one thing, not because you must do it, not because it's expected of you. You do because it's the middah of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, **כִּי הַפֶּץ הַסֵּד** – Hashem desires chesed. **וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדִרְכָיו** – You want to be like Hashem (Devarim 28:9). Just purely for the mitzvah of doing a chesed.

The Secret Gabbai

If you come the first one in the beis hamedrash—nobody is looking—try to put together the sefarim where they belong. Nobody should see that you did it. In the shul, if you can stay a minute after everyone else—make believe you're busy with something—and after everyone leaves put some siddurim back on the shelf. You can pick up something from the floor, a tissue, or wipe down a table.

Maybe you're walking outside and you see there's a banana peel on the sidewalk. Before anyone looks, with your shoe shove it off the sidewalk into the gutter, the sewer, so somebody shouldn't slip on it and go for a ride to the hospital. Or if there's a piece of plastic on the sidewalk—plastics are dangerous; people can slip on them. So you kick it to the side. Sometimes there's something greasy on the sidewalk; when nobody's looking you sprinkle some dust, some dirt there, to protect the passersby. Secretly you're doing a chesed so that people shouldn't get hurt.

Now, let's say it's the end of the day and you forgot. There's always something. Wait till your mother is asleep, or maybe when she's not looking, and you'll tiptoe into the living room and put something away. There's always something you can do in the house; for your wife, your children.

Encouraging Letters

If you can't think of anything to do, so write a nice letter to someone and encourage him. Don't sign your name. Or sign a false name. I do that sometimes; I write letters to encourage people. Sometimes people are discouraged so I write, "You have a very good name in this neighborhood. People think well of you." I don't sign my name; I want them to think it's someone important.

Here's a rav who is trying his best to introduce in his kehilla certain changes to improve the atmosphere. But there are people there who are opposing him. He wanted to make a chumra and people didn't want it. I sent a letter to him encouraging him. I said, "You're right! People admire you!" Do you know what it means to receive a letter of encouragement from a stranger? It's a big lift.

Try it once. Write to your friend and encourage him. Or to your rebbe[1] . Every rebbe[2] has enemies, that you have to know. So write him a letter. Say, "Rebbe, we are all for you. We are all loyal to you." It will make him feel good. And so with 32 cents, you can do a very big mitzvah of encouraging people secretly.

And so that will be our second kabbalah for the coming year. Make up your mind that once a day you're going to do an act of chessed secretly. There are all kinds of acts you could do that will help the tzibbur or help private people. And so make it a principle in your life—every day I must do one secret favor for people, one secret thing of chessed.

Part III. The Third Resolution

Four Lovely Words

We come now to our third kabbalah, our third and final 'resolution', for erev Rosh Hashana and for the rest of the year. And it's very simple. It's just four words. Don't tell anyone I told you this but once a day when nobody is looking and nobody is listening, say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "I love You, Hashem."

Did you ever say that in your life? There are even righteous people who never said it once in their lives! And it's a command in the Torah: וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' (Deuteronomy 6:5).

אֶלֹקֶיךָ – You should love Hashem with all your heart (Devarim 6:5). It's one of the greatest, most important of all mitzvos, and yet it's one of the most neglected of all.

Every day, twice a day, we remind ourselves, וְאָהַבְתָּ – you should love Hashem Elokecha. You're always talking about it, but when are you doing it?

Beyond Davening

That's why the Chofetz Chaim says in Mishnah Berurah that when you're saying that possuk you should try to love Hashem. At least then—think for one second that you love Hashem. An excellent idea. Each time you say krias shema you think, “I love Hashem.”

But it could be you're in a big hurry while you're saying that, you forget. Also, you can't speak then either; you can't say it with your mouth. And so we're going to recommend for ourselves the following kabbalah for the coming year: Every day find a few seconds in solitude and say “I love You, Hashem.” Go into a telephone booth, pick up the receiver and act like you're talking; you're making a long distance call to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and you say, “I love You, Hashem.”

A Lot of Love

Now, genuine ahavas Hashem is not as easy as that. Because to love Hashem means that we fix into our hearts an affection, an emotion of love towards Hashem; so much so, that the heart is filled with intense love and affection for Hashem and there's no room for anything else.

The Rambam describes it as follows: וְנִמְצָא שׁוֹגֵה בָּהּ תָּמִיד בְּאֵלּוֹ חוּלָה חָלִי – The one who loves Hashem is immersed in the love of Hashem at all times as if he was sick with love, שְׁאִין רִיעָתוֹ פְּנִיָּה מֵאַהֲבַת אוֹתָהּ אֲשֶׁר וְהוּא שׁוֹגֵה בָּהּ – he can't keep his mind off Hashem; whether he's sitting in his house or walking in the street, when he's eating or drinking, he's always immersed in thoughts of Hashem (Hilchos Teshuva 10:3).

There were people, even in our times, who lived like that. R' Yisroel Salanter, zichrono livrachah, was once arrested for that. He lived in Koenigsberg and he used to walk on the outskirts of the town and he used to make motions while he was talking to Hashem; he was brought to the police station because of that. Then those who knew him came and explained to the police that this man is engrossed in a very great emotion of love; he can't help himself. So they wrote in his passport—in that place you had to carry around your papers with you all the time to show the police—so they wrote there: Immer versunken in philosophische gedanken. It means he is always

immersed in philosophical thoughts. That's what the police wrote in his passport so they shouldn't bother him next time.

And so to achieve that requires a lot of work. It requires everything you have to love Hashem: **בְּכָל לִבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ**. It's the highest degree of perfection and it requires very great effort. The Chovos Halevavos tells us you have to go through all the preliminaries in his sefer—a long difficult sefer—until you come to the summit of ahavas Hashem.

A Little Love

But this mitzvah is not given only to great tzaddikim. It's for everybody, every boy and girl. Even an ignorant man is required to fulfill it. It doesn't mean they'll love Hakadosh Baruch Hu like Dovid Hamelech loved Hakadosh Baruch Hu or like the Chovos Halevavos did, but there is love for Hakadosh Baruch Hu that you can buy at bargain rates. And whatever you can achieve, it's precious.

You know, when you go into business so everybody likes to become a millionaire. But it doesn't mean that you won't do less. Even the man who has a peanut cart on the street corner, he sells peanuts, because a little bit is better than nothing. That's a klal gadol in hilchos business. You try to make whatever you can. Same thing, everybody would like to be a most perfect servant of Hashem and to love Hashem with all his heart, like the Chovos Halevavos, like the great Avraham Avinu. **אֲבֹרָהֶם אֱהֵבִי** – Avraham who loves Me (Yeshaya 41:8). But if you're not going to do that, at least a little bit you should love Him. You can learn to love Hashem even on a small scale.

Even a little bit, even one moment if you love Hashem, it's also worthwhile. A diamond is precious no matter how small it is, and this is one of the most precious gems in our lives. And it's not too difficult. On a small scale, it's certainly possible. And of course, if you keep on practicing, you'll become more and more of an expert.

And just by saying it alone, **הַחֲצִיצוֹנוּת מְעוֹרְרֶת אֶת הַפְּנִימִיּוּת** – your exteriority bestirs your interiority. At first it may seem a small thing but you should know that it's going to have a powerful effect on your character. **הַמּוֹחֵשֶׁבֶה** – **בְּמַשְׁכֵּת אֶחָד אֲחֵר הָרִיבוֹר** – The thoughts follow the words. Saying it kindles at least a spark; it's going to kindle a fire in your heart. And it grows. Little by little, that love becomes part of your thoughts. You begin to actually love Hashem. And the more you say it, it can become an inferno, a blazing fire of ahavas Hashem.

Loving Gratitude

Of course, the more the words are backed up with thoughts and emotion, the greater the flame will be. Just to be a robot, to say words that are devoid of any thought, that's nothing. So it pays to think, to prepare your mind.

And one of the easy ways to learn to love Hashem is, that when you enjoy something in this world, you should think of Hashem and love Him for it. If you're eating a delicious apple say, "I love You, Hashem – בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' בּוֹרֵא פֶּרִי הָעֵץ." And learn to say it with ahavah.

You walk into a warm house on a cold night, and you rub your hands together. You're thinking, "Aah! Nice and warm. I love Hashem for this. He gives me fuel and central heating and all the machinery necessary to keep my house warm." And so, if nobody is around when you walk in the door, say, "I love You, Hashem." Or when you sit down to supper, "I love You, Hashem." You can love Him for the tasty chicken and potatoes.

Stimulating Love

And so ahavas Hashem is not difficult in this way. When a person loves Hashem in return for benefits that are being showered upon him, that's also love. While you're healthy—you're walking in the street and breathing the air and you're full of food and your blood is coursing through your veins, love Hashem for that. You can love Hashem because you have two healthy eyes; not glass eyes. You'll love Hashem because you have your own teeth. And if you have false teeth, love Him because you have false teeth. Once upon a time there were no false teeth available so you can love Him for false teeth too.

If you'll learn to love Hashem because of your body which is functioning perfectly—you have good health—that's excellent. If you can move your bowels comfortably, love Hashem for it! There are some people who have great difficulty. They suffer from constipation to no end, and you don't. So each time you come out, "I love You Hashem for that."

And after a while you'll find many stimuli to cause this emotion of ahavas Hashem. And all of these emotions, little by little, will make the four words you say dynamite! And therefore, that's our third kabbalah for the new year. Every day, when no one else is around—only Hashem is listening—we'll make sure to say these four words "I love You, Hashem".

It sounds funny, doesn't it? Listen to me; it's not funny at all. It's the most serious thing in the world. Every day you can find a place, a corner, to be in solitude just for a few seconds; in a secret place, nobody is listening, nobody sees you. Say it in English. You want to say it in Yiddish? Very good. Ich hob Dir lieb, Ribono Shel Olam. Speak lashon kodesh. Speak Hungarian. Whatever suits you, but say it: "I love You Hashem."

The Three Tributes

Now, there are many other ideas to choose from if you're serious about making kabbalos for the new year. I'm not saying that these are the only ones. But these three are important examples and they're quite easy too. Because number one is just thinking—to think for thirty seconds about Olam Haba. The second one is doing—to do a secret chessed every day. And number three is dibbur, to say a few words. Every day, once a day, "I love You, Hashem."

Whatever you choose, make it a kabalah, a resolution. It means you resolve to do it—no matter what, this is what you're committing to. That's **שָׂאוּ מִנְחָה וּבֹאוּ לִפְנֵי**. You're bringing an offering when you come before Him. At least you're coming with something clear-cut. Otherwise, it'll be the same old story. You'll make some vague promises, cloudy ideas, and you'll stumble into the new year with nothing.

The Stumbling Fool

That's what Mishlei warns us about: **הַחֵכֶם לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת** – The one with a wise heart grabs mitzvos, **וְהֶאֱוִיל שִׁפְתָּיִם יִלְבֹּט** – while 'the fool of lips' will stumble (10:8). It means that the wise person gets busy with achieving while the fool, he's spouting ideas and ideals but he stumbles into failure.

Now, you have to understand that when Mishlei here is describing the 'fool of lips' he's talking about a person who is not such a big fool because actually it's a person who is making use of his lips. He is speaking about ideals, about great dreams that he hopes to accomplish—achievements in excellence of character, in finding favor in the eyes of Hashem, in perfection of service of Hashem. He speaks about all that, but **יִלְבֹּט** – he stumbles. He is nichshal because it never goes beyond talking. He's **וְהֶאֱוִיל שִׁפְתָּיִם** – he's a fool because he only talks about these things.

Of course we welcome such fools who talk about great ideals—at least he knows it's important—but it's a pity on him because he never gets beyond his lips.

The Fool in the Mirror

Now who is that fool? Very many of us. Because even though we want to be better, the road seems to be too steep and too long to traverse. And so, we stumble into the new year. Even if we think in terms of changing our ways, we give up or push it off; we procrastinate and stumble.

But Mishlei is telling us here that there is a way forward. **יִקַּח מִצְוֹת** – Grab onto some things that you can do. Of course we'd like to learn the whole Chovos Halevavos. We'd like to learn Mesillas Yesharim and Sha'arei Teshuvah and the Kuzari and the Rambam Hilchos Deos and Hilchos Teshuvah. Very

good. But right now, תִּפְסֹּת מוֹעֵט תִּפְסֹּת – let's grab onto something. Right now, on the Day of Judgement, when we're standing in front of the King, that's the time to be a yikach mitzvos, to grab on to a few things and to resolve to hold on to them tightly all year long.

After all, you're asking Him for a big favor—you want another year. Let's say you come and ask somebody for a big favor and you're not giving him any kind of remuneration to make it desirable he should grant that favor to you. That's not the way. And therefore we'll come to Hakadosh Baruch Hu with the resolve that this year is going to be a different year. And that's an excellent way to approach the King on Rosh Hashanah, and then to stand before Him in service all year long. And just because of that לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבוּ וְתִחַתְמוּ בּוֹלְכֵם לְאַלְתֵּר לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים בְּסִפְּרָן שֶׁל צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִים.

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Let's Get Practical

A Plan For The Year

This year, I won't stumble into Rosh Hashanah like any other year, rather I will make some serious resolutions and hold onto them throughout that year. The Rov suggested keeping a small journal to track our progress in our kabbalos. He also suggested three kabbalos that we can accept upon ourselves for the coming year in the realm of machshavah, dibbur and maaseh. Machshavah: To think for thirty seconds each day about Olam Haba. Dibbur: To say at least once a day: "I love You, Hashem!". Maaseh: To do a secret act of kindness every day purely for the purpose of emulating Hashem.

May we all succeed at this great program!

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

657 – The Shofar of Rosh Hashana | **730** – Ten Easy Steps to Greatness

764 – Day of Judgement | **892** – Aspects of Rosh Hashana

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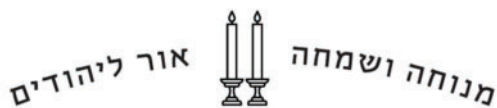


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Shabbos Inspired

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Hashem's Smile

When we had the Beis HaMikdash, the love between Hashem and the Jewish people was "face to face." When we went into exile, Hashem turned His face away from us, so to speak. *Shabbos Kodesh* is like the Beis HaMikdash. During the week, a person lives with sadness, worries, and troubles. He knows very well how lacking he is in Torah, *yir'as Shamayim*, and *mitzvos*. Then Shabbos comes, and "*May Hashem shine His face upon you*" (Bemidbar 6:25) – Hashem shows His smiling face to him, so to speak.

It's very important to know that when Shabbos comes, the wonderful elevation we experience is not due to us. Every Jew, regardless of his good deeds or his *yir'as Shamayim*, receives a kiss from Hashem, so to speak. (Perhaps that's why the minhag arose that when Shabbos arrives one recites *Shir HaShirim*, in which it's written, "*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*") There is a sudden change in the way Hashem relates to us. This change is even drastic. It is as if we were looking at someone's back, thinking he was angry, and suddenly he turns around, and we see he's smiling. Everything changes in an instant!

That is why Chazal taught us that one of the most important things on Shabbos is to feel that "all your work is done." (*Mechilta, Yisro 7*) Shabbos means everything that was going on until now stops! It's a big mistake to take all the feelings of the weekdays into Shabbos. It's silly not to leave behind all the sadness, cares, and thoughts about our spiritual deficiencies, for they go against the whole idea of Shabbos. This is because Shabbos is a time when Hashem's "face" is revealed, and He is "smiling." It is not the time to cry and plead before Hashem over mundane matters. On Shabbos the approach is, "All your work is done!"

The Brisker Rav, zt"l, was known to be extremely careful not to embarrass people who came to see him. He never removed anyone from his home, no matter how big of a *rasha* the person was. When *Shabos Kodesh* comes, we enter Hashem's home. We wear priestly garments, light the "Menorah," sit at the Shabbos table, and eat the food Hashem prepared for us and even paid for. We are His guests. At that moment, every Jew receives a smile from Hashem. "May Hashem shine His face upon you." And Hashem doesn't remove any Jew from His home, regardless of lack of merits.

All we ask is: "Bless us, our Father...with Your shining countenance." (End of *Shemoneh Esrei*) If You just show us a smile, then we'll have everything. "For by the light of Your countenance You have given us... the Torah of life and the love of kindness and righteousness, blessing and compassion, life and peace." That's what Shabbos is all about. A day when Hashem smiles at every Jew!

This week's edition was made possible by the contributions of the Klal.

Thank You and Tizku Lemitzvos!

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 May our elevated Shabbosim lead us to be zoche to a *שנה טובה וישועה*!

Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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QUESTION

On the subject of making kabbalos, isn't it an inyan to resolve to continue the good things that we're doing, to reinforce them, instead of taking on new things?

ANSWER


Among the kabbalos, the resolutions that should be made for Rosh Hashanah is to strengthen one's self in the good things he did until now. Certainly. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "The good things, you did already. You won't add anything to them? So why should I add another year to you?"

There has to be some inducement for additional life and that is additional progress. Let's say a man already achieved a certain degree of perfection—so he's perfect already to a certain degree. But if he doesn't intend to go ahead, to achieve more, so Hashem says, "So now I'll take you to Me. You finished already? I'll bring you to the Next World. I'll reward you right away."

So we say, "Don't be in a hurry, Hashem. We're not in a hurry. We'll do more than that. We promise You, we'll do more than that in this world."

And so Hashem says, "Oh, you'll promise to do more? So I'll let you hang around a little longer."

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