

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe Rabinowitz zt"l

פרשת נצבים – וילך
ימים נוראים

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לעלוי נשמת
הרב ר' שמעון יהודה
בן הגה"צ ר' אברהם יעקב זצ"ל
לכבוד היארצייט כ"ה אלול

פרשת נצבים – וילך

וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ אֶת שְׁבוּתָנוּ וְרַחֲמָנוּ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים (דברים ל' ג')

Emunah in the Geulah

After the Bnei Yisroel heard the terrible punishments of the *Tochachah*, Moshe Rabbeinu spoke words of encouragement. He reassured Klal Yisroel that after all the travails of *galus*, there would come the time of the *Geulah*, when HaKadosh Boruch Hu will gather us and redeem us.

As is the case regarding the entire Torah, we are obligated to believe in every single word of these *nevuos* that Moshe told us. Moreover, in regard to these promises specifically, there is a special obligation for every Jew to be aware of the eventual *Geulah*. The Rambam classifies this belief as one of the main principles of our *Emunah*.

Not to Despair Even in the Face of Great Suffering

At the same time that this requirement of *Emunah* is so essential, however, it could also pose a difficulty. After all, when one observes the suffering that Klal Yisroel has undergone throughout our 2,000-year *galus*, thoughts of despair may begin to creep into a person's head. When will the *Geulah* finally come? Will it ever come? The facts on the ground seem to point to continuous suffering without any end. How is a Yid supposed to continue believing despite these seeming obstacles?

The Chofetz Chaim in our *parshah* addresses these points directly. His hallowed words were addressed between the two World-Wars, at a time when many yidden were indeed losing their hope in the continuation of Yiddishkeit. The suffering and desolation at the time were tremendous for the Yidden in all areas. Many towns had been completely ripped apart during World-War 1, and the poverty of European Jewry was staggering. In Russia, Stalin was establishing his reign of terror, with the express goal of stamping out the last vestiges of the Torah. The situation seemed dreadfully bleak, and many Jews were lured to join various non-religious and anti-religious movements which claimed to be offering a life of happiness and success that the Torah did not. It was a difficult time for Klal Yisroel.

The Existence and Survival of Klal Yisroel is beyond the Confines of Natural Law

It was in these troubled times that the Chofetz Chaim penned these words of comfort. Do not be overwhelmed, writes the Chofetz Chaim, by the tremendous odds against the survival of Klal Yisroel. True, he says, if we would be discussing a different nation, then indeed, it would appear that the nation is on the brink of a complete downfall. However, we are speaking about Klal Yisroel, a Nation whose very existence is supernatural, beyond the usual confines of natural limitations and occurrences. In fact, he says, there have been so many instances in our history where it seemed that the end had arrived.

The Chofetz Chaim then proceeds to enumerate many such periods in the annals of our history:

- Hashem had promised that Avrohom Avinu would father a nation from Sarah, and yet, Avrohom was nearing 100 years old and still, no such children had appeared. All their acquaintances and those who knew of them had surely long since abandoned any possibility that the promise would be realized.

We can just imagine the way people spoke at the time:

'You mean to tell me that that old woman Sarah will have a child?! Ha! Why don't you find someone in the old-age home who has a few months left to live and tell me she'll have a child! Or maybe someone who has been sent home from the hospital out of lack of means to cure him! When one of these people has a child, then I'll believe that Sarah will also!'

When they were finally granted a child, it was an astonishing miracle. Thus, the very first step in the process of establishing the Nation only occurred through a miracle that went against all odds and assumptions.

- Yaakov Avinu was chased by his brother Eisav with the help of his grandson Elifaz. Eisav was completely bent on murdering Yaakov, and Yaakov was only saved through many miracles. Years later, Lavan chased after Yaakov with a powerful army, outraged at Yaakov for 'stealing' what he considered to be his own wealth. Had Hashem not warned him to let Yaakov be, he surely would have gone ahead with his plans of destroying Yaakov.
- Yosef Hatzadik, who led the Bnei Yisroel through their initial years in Mitzrayim, was thrown first into a deadly pit containing snakes and scorpions, and later into an underground dungeon, where it could be all but assumed that he would remain for the rest of his life. The fact that he emerged and became leader of the Bnei Yisroel is only due to the Hand of Hashem which was intervening in every step.
- When the Bnei Yisroel were slaves in Mitzrayim, Paroh decreed that all Jewish baby boys were to be thrown in the river. In addition, all Egyptians were charged with the task of discovering when and where such babies were found. The Egyptians were only too happy to comply with this decree, as they shared Paroh's hatred and hysterical paranoia about the Jews. All hope for the Jews at the time was surely lost.

We can imagine the headlines: 'Royal edict brings the young, rising Jewish nation to early demise!'

No one could imagine that the Jews could escape such a decree that had been issued by the king himself. Perhaps a few individual babies could be hidden, but certainly not enough for the furtherance of the nation.

Even besides for the specific decree against the babies, the very slavery of the Jewish People was reason enough to believe that they would be destroyed. The Egyptians were dumbfounded when their plan backfired. How was it that the more they afflicted them the more they increased? Indeed, it had no natural explanation, and was only due to Hashem's decree. As Rashi explains, the more they afflicted them, so did HaKadosh Boruch Hu desire to increase them.

- In the time of Achashveirosh, all hope again seemed lost. This time, Haman, the king's closest advisor, had convinced the king to order absolute annihilation for the Jews, with no exceptions! The entire nation was to be eradicated in one day. How would they escape such an all-encompassing decree? The outward appearance was one of total doom for Klal Yisroel. Who would have predicted that the day of their decreed annihilation would become the day in which they would turn around and destroy tens of thousands of their enemies? Who could have foreseen that the tables would turn to such an extent that when Haman was coming to request the hanging of Mordechai, he had to glorify him instead, and that Haman would eventually be hanged on the very tree that he prepared for Mordechai? The only conceivable way for these outcomes to happen was through the direct hashgacha of HaKadosh Boruch Hu.

These examples given by the Chofetz Chaim are but a drop in the bucket among all the instances in which we were only able to continue as a result of the direct, guiding Hand of HaKadosh Boruch Hu.

The Chofetz Chaim then makes his point for his own times. We must not despair, he reassures his Jewish brothers. True, times are difficult for us. However, that has no bearing on our ultimate survival. Hashem has never stopped guiding us and He will not stop now. Hashem promised to

eventually redeem us and certainly He will do so. It is up to us to remain with the Jewish People and not to lose our determination and hope, and we will eventually be rewarded with the final *yeshuah*.

The Emunah of the Chofetz Chaim - in Real Life

The Chofetz Chaim writes of *Emunah*, and indeed, the Chofetz Chaim's own *Emunah* was so strong and tangible. There is a famous story involving the Chofetz Chaim, which I heard from his grandson Rav Herschel Zaks Zt"l:

The Chofetz Chaim heard that in a certain city called Lida, there was a slackening in their attitude to Yiddishkeit and mitzvah observance. The Chofetz Chaim decided to make a trip there and attempt to strengthen them. It so happened that the train ride to Lida on the day the Chofetz Chaim traveled was extremely crowded, and the aged Chofetz Chaim was at first forced to stand for the trip. There was a young boy on the train at the time by the name of Aryeh Leib Bakst (later the Rosh Yeshiva of the Detroit Yeshiva). He saw the Chofetz Chaim standing, and he offered his chameleon for the Chofetz Chaim to sit on, which the Chofetz Chaim gratefully accepted. Out of his gratitude for the boy, the Chofetz Chaim took him around with him in Lida, seeing to it that the young boy's needs were met.

Our present knowledge of what happened in the shul in Leda during the Chofetz Chaim's visit is based on the later testimony of Rav Bakstl.

The Chofetz Chaim got up in front of the shul, and he began by telling the crowd a mashal. "When a man goes to a new, strange, place," he began, "it is so helpful for him if he has a message to deliver to a resident of this town."

[To make the Chofetz Chaim's mashal understandable to us, we will express the example as it would be applicable in our own settings:]

An individual from Lakewood, Reuven, is compelled to move to Arizona for a period of two years. He will be moving there without his family, only able to contact them by means of telephone. He makes all the necessary arrangements – he locates a nearby Jewish town with a minyan, he arranges for kosher food that he can obtain, and he prepares himself to leave. As the day of his departure nears, Reuven feels more and more apprehensive about his time that he will spend there. True, he has made all the arrangements, but he just cannot shake off the feeling that he is going to a place where he does not know a soul. A feeling of loneliness and nervousness begins to come over him.

Two days before moving day, Reuven is approached by a member of his shul. "I heard you are going to be moving to such-and-such town in Arizona. I happen to have a brother who lives there. Would you mind bringing him a package from me?"

Another member of the shul who was standing nearby, overheard this exchange. "You are going to that town? Great! I need to send a message for my cousin. Would you mind delivering the message?"

Reuven is overjoyed upon hearing these requests. He is no longer fated to be a complete stranger in his new town; now he is a person of standing, bringing important messages and deliveries to residents of the town. Soon, more requests of this genre begin reaching Reuven. With each additional request, Reuven's confidence builds and his happiness increases.

The Chofetz Chaim concluded his mashal, and he now addressed the crowd. "Rabbosai," he cried, "I am no youngster! In just a few short years, I will be journeying to the Olam Ha'emes. I am nervous; I don't know anyone there! Please Rabbosai, does anyone have a message for me to tell their late relatives? Yankel, can I give the message to your father that you observe Shabbos properly? Yossi, can I tell your brother that you send your children to the religious

schools?" In this way, the Chofetz Chaim mentioned the various failings of the city and where they should improve.

Rav Bakst would relate that the crying that occurred in that shul was uncontrollable. Puddles of tears appeared on the floor as the townspeople accepted upon themselves to better their ways.

'Please rebbi, tell my father that I am closing my store on Shabbos!' 'Tell my mother that I am davening three times a day!' A true spirit of teshuvah came over the city as a result of the Chofetz Chaim's heartfelt, soul-stirring words.

Later, Rav Bakst would recount this incident to the famed mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein. Rav Chatzkel was enraptured by the story and he would ask Rav Bakst to go over each detail. Afterwards, he would exclaim, "Only the Chofetz Chaim had such an Emunah that he was able to truly convey the message to the townspeople. If I would have done it, it would have been a game!"

We must remember that the Emunah of Rav Chatzkel Levenstein himself was legendary. Rav Shlomo Wolbe used to portray the Emunah of Rav Chatzkel in the following words: "Rav Chatzkel does not have a crystal-clear understanding of Emunah in his mind, nor a rock-solid feeling of Emunah in his heart. Rav Chatzkel has Emunah in his hands!"

And yet, in comparison to the *Emunah* of the Chofetz Chaim, Rav Chatzkel felt that his own *Emunah* was merely artificial, and that it would have held no sway over the people of Lida. The madreigos of *Emunah* are infinitely deep, and we must constantly work to strengthen our own *Emunah* – in all the different aspects that the Rambam enumerates. We must work on our belief in the existence of Hashem, and that there is reward and punishment. We must strengthen our *Emunah* in the truth of the Torah, and, as we have been discussing, in the final *Geulah*.

The Emunah of Klal Yisroel Through the Generations

Through the generations, there have been great yidden and simple yidden who have had a real, tangible *Emunah* in the coming of *Moshiach*.

My father z"l used to tell of his Zaide, who would put on a special coat each day in honor of Moshiach, and he would then walk to the top of the nearby hill and check if Moshiach had arrived. He would return with a dejected look, murmuring disappointedly, "No, he still did not come."

Rav Nosson Wachtfogel was in a doctor's office and was instructed to make an appointment for a few days later. The receptionist asked him if he could come back on Wednesday. "I can't come then," was his reply.

"Why not?"

"I'll be in Yerushalayim!"

"Ok," the receptionist told him, "when you return from Yerushalayim, you'll come back here."

As Rav Nosson stepped way from the desk, the yungerman who was accompanying him, whispered, "Make the appointment for Wednesday. Trust me!"

For these people, it was not a 'game'. They lived with a genuine *Emunah* in the imminent arrival of *Moshiach*. What about the fact that we don't see it unfolding? That is of no consequence, as is demonstrated in the following anecdote.

Rav Sholom Eisen was the posek for the Brisker Rav on the various shailos that arose in the Brisker Rav's household. He once questioned the Brisker Rav on a statement which he and the

Chazon Ish had both made: The Brisker Rav and Chazon Ish both said that we should not assume that Moshiach will come to the medinah of the Zionists and simply assume the role of leadership. That will not be the case. Rather, there will be no medinah existent when Moshiach arrives.

This statement troubled Rav Sholom Eisen. "But I don't understand," he objected to the Brisker Rav. "We are required to have Emunah that Moshiach can come on any day – even today. The medinah, though, clearly still exists today. How then can we be so certain that the medinah will cease to exist prior to Moshiach's arrival?"

Rav Sholom recounted that the Brisker Rav became upset with him for asking this question. "How long must it take?" he demanded. "Today, the medinah can disappear, and today, Moshiach can come!"

We need to believe that *Moshiach* can come at any moment. How he will come and take over? That is not our concern. Hashem is capable of doing things in ways that we cannot fathom, and our job is simply to hope for it and anticipate it each day.

The Spirit of Teshuvah in the Time of Moshiach

Until here, we have discussed the Chofetz Chaim's moving words of comfort which he directed at the Jews of his generation. It would seem to me that were the Chofetz Chaim alive today, he would have delivered a different sort of message regarding *Moshiach*. To understand this, let us look at the words in our *parshah* which focus directly on the *Geulah*. ומל' ה' אלוֹקֵיךָ אֶת לִבְךָ וְאֶת לִבְּבָנֶיךָ / Hashem your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children. The Ramban on this *passuk* explains at length how from the time of Creation, each human being had *בחירה*/free choice as to whether he would act properly or not. The purpose of this freedom is to allow a person to earn his reward by choosing the proper path. However, after the coming of *Moshiach*, this state will change. At that point, Hashem will awaken the hearts of the entire world to His Service. Every person will naturally desire to fulfill the Will of Hashem with his whole being. The Ohr Hachaim elaborates further, explaining how there will first be a general awakening in the realm of Torah learning, followed by a specific *teshuvah* regarding fulfilling the positive and negative *mitzvos*.

When we observe the situation in our own times, it seems so clear that the prophecies have already begun to unfold. The amount of Torah learning that takes place in our times has no equivalent in the times of a hundred years ago. In our times, every working *baal habus* understands that there is a requirement for fixed times for learning, whether for his own growth, and together with his own children. So many working people are accomplished *talmidei chachamim*. As a consequence of this, the level of diligence and meticulousness in *mitzvos* has increased as well. The *chessed* that is done in Klal Yisroel is mindboggling and inspiring.

Clearly, the *Geulah* is at the doorstep. Our *avodah* in these times is to utilize this strengthening of Torah and *mitzvos* and hold on to it with all our beings, and not allow ourselves to become distracted by all the *nisyonos* that are being presented specifically at the final stage of the *galus*. It is true that we can already feel the awakening of the *Geulah*, but it has not actually arrived. There are difficulties and hardships in many areas, and there are temptations as well. We must remain steadfast in our *Emunah* until the very last moment.

Elul and Yamim Noraim

During the days of Elul and *Yamim Noraim* each year, there is also a similar awakening of *Teshuvah* and Torah and *mitzvos*. Hashem places inspiration for *teshuvah* in our hearts, and here too, we must utilize these feelings of inspiration, and embark upon a path of true *teshuvah* and change in ourselves. Let us be so careful not to surrender to the *yetzer hara* who tries to quash these feelings within us and to influence us to proceed as usual.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל
ימים נוראים

Bez"H we should strengthen our Torah and *mitzvos* in these days of Elul and *Yamim Noraim*, and we should be *zoche* to a *k'sivah v'chasimah tovah*. We should be *zoche* to strengthen our *Emunah* in these final days before the coming of *Moshiach*, may it be *bimheirah viyameinu*.

ימים נוראים

דַּרְשׁוּ יְהוָה בְּהַמְצָאוֹ קְרָאָהוּ בְּהִיטּוֹ קְרוֹב
(ישעיה נ"ה ו' – הפטרה לתענית ציבור)

אלו עשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכפורים (ראש השנה דף י"ח)

Utilizing the Opportunity of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*

As we go through these days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, it is so important for us to realize the priceless opportunity that is available for us. The *seforim* illustrate this opportunity with the following *meshal*:

To gain an audience with the king for a hearing on a personal issue is no simple matter. Various steps must be taken before it can possibly become a reality. 'Protektzia' must be used, a fax needs to be sent to Eretz Yisroel, an askan is called for help, etc. – and all of this for a short appointment with the king, in a few months' time. Even when the long-awaited meeting finally arrives, it is not a simple matter to utilize the opportunity properly. You are escorted into the king by ushers, who stand by the door seeing to it that you do not go over your allotted few minutes. It is clear from the look on the king's face that he has many important issues on his mind, and that you must get right down to stating your business – and quickly – before the king loses patience. You nervously try to maximize your time as well as you can before you are shoed away, and as you leave, you are enveloped with a feeling of doubt about the success of your mission.

The above scenario describes the process of having an 'official' meeting with the king. Not so, when the king happens to be staying at the home of your own next-door neighbor for a few days. How it happened is a story in itself – there was a shidduch with the king's family member that was being arranged, etc., and somehow it ended up that the king is there. That is all beside the point. What matters is that now the king is there, and there is a possible golden opportunity at hand. You ask your neighbor if he would mind it if you would come to his house at mealtimes.

Your neighbor is amicable and welcoming. "Sure," he says agreeably, "come on over! Gezunte hait!"

During the meals, the scene is an entirely different one than of the above described. A discussion ensues in which you take part. The king enjoys hearing your take in the matter, and he asks you if you can show him the manuscript that you said you have in your possession. What results is a true friendship with the king, through which you have the capability to request things which would never have been imaginable otherwise.

These two scenarios are a description of the difference that there is between 'approaching' HaKadosh Boruch Hu during the year, or during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Certainly, we can, and must, daven throughout the year. However, having the *tefillah* reach the *Kisei HaKavod* is not a simple manner. Chazal instituted *pesukei d'zimrah* and various other *halachos* of *tefillah* for the purpose of allowing our *tefillos* a clear path to *Shamayim*, without being obstructed by *kelipos*/impure forces. Oftentimes, one's sins can ch"v prevent his *tefillos* from being heard. If one does not concentrate properly, that can also be a cause for his *tefillos* not being accepted.

During the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, however, the entire situation is completely different. It is not a matter of being granted an audience with the King of kings; rather, HaKadosh Boruch Hu is here, close to us, waiting כביכול for us to come 'shmooze' with Him. We are given the chance to come and speak with HaKadosh Boruch on a closer, more personal level. How important it is for us to utilize the opportunity that we have.

How foolish it would be if the king would be staying at the home of your neighbor, and you were to squander your opportunity through simple laziness and inertia. "I know the I can join the king at supper tonight, but after my long day, I don't really feel like it. He'll still be around at breakfast; I'll go then."

The morning comes, and you are feeling foggy and drowsy. "The king is not supposed to be leaving before three o'clock. I'll catch him at lunch!"

Various matters come up for you in the morning, and it turns out that you are unable to reach your neighbor's house until two thirty in the afternoon. By then, the king is already preparing to leave, and there is no more time for shmoozing.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity was wasted without any good reason. What a total shame.

During *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, HaKadosh Boruch is here, awaiting our coming to Him. As the *navi* tells us בהיותו קרוב ה' בהמצאו קראוהו דרשו ה' / Seek Hashem when He is found; call Him when He is close! We dare not push off the opportunity for the last minute.

Recognizing and Avoiding the Trap of the Yetzer Hara

We must realize that the *Yetzer Hara* specifically tries to make us busy, or tired, during these awesome Days – anything that will divert us from our task at hand. We can push it off until the last day, and we end up missing that day as well due to whatever we may have occupied ourselves with. Erev Yom Kippur passes by in a blur of *seudos*, *kapparos*, and the other *minhagim* and *chiyuvim* of the day; and we are left with only Yom Kippur to daven properly. As we *klap al-cheit* on Yom Kippur, we suddenly realize how much more intense and meaningful our *teshuvah* would be, had we only devoted the proper time and attention to it during the days preceding Yom Kippur. It is difficult to concentrate without the proper preparation, and Yom Kippur is itself is thus not utilized. Let us not squander the chance that we have, and let us rather see to utilize every moment of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* properly, by throwing ourselves into the davening and selichos, by analyzing our behavior through the year as best as we are able, and by regretting our mistakes and resolving to correct them.

Accepting Proper Kabbalos

As we analyze our behaviors, it is also important for us to see what *kabbalos* we accepted upon ourselves last Yom Kippur, and to ascertain if we were successful in implementing them. If we did not succeed, which is many times the case, we need to try to determine where it is that we went wrong. Making a real change in ourselves requires careful thought and planning, so that we do not fall into the trap of accepting that which we will not be capable of carrying out. During these days, we are on a higher *madreigah* than we are on during the rest of the year. We need to acknowledge that reality and accept changes which will be feasible for us to implement even from our year-round

madreigah. At the same time, it is not sufficient to accept miniscule or negligible things that will not be indicative of any real change. Careful planning and thought are required, along with *tefillah* for *siyatta d'shmaya*. If we apply ourselves properly in the task and daven to Hashem for His assistance, Hashem awaits us with open arms and will surely help us in achieving the goal properly.

The following moving story is a beautiful illustration of the idea we are discussing:

The Bobover Rebbe was in Poland during the Holocaust. At one point, he was hiding in underground bunker in the forest. The Nazis ym"s knew of these bunkers well, and they had their methods of discovering them. They would plunge long poles deep into the ground, and they would feel if there was solid ground underneath or not. When a bunker was discovered, there was one single punishment for all its members: immediate shooting.

At one point, it was clear to the members of this bunker that the Germans were searching overhead. The bunker's one form of protection was a single plank of wood which they held up at the bunker roof, in an attempt to prevent the Germans from sticking the pole into the bunker. The terror inside the bunker was enormous. Discovery and death seemed imminent.

Hiding inside the bunker was also the Zidatchover Rebbe. He announced that everyone inside the bunker must make a kabbalah as a zechus. All obeyed, except for the Bobover Rebbe. The Zidatchover questioned him, demanding that he, too, make a kabbalah.

"I can't," was the Bobover Rebbe's reply. "What should I accept upon myself – to fast on different days? Right now, I am in a state of confusion and panic, and I will surely accept something beyond my capabilities. I can only accept a kabbalah when I am in a state of calmness and clarity."

The Zidatchover Rebbe, however, would not be put off so easily. He continued to urge the Bobover, "Chazal tell us the one must be (בראשית רבה ע' א') בעת צרה/accept vows during a time of duress. Now is such a time. You must fulfill this dictum of Chazal!"

The Bobover Rebbe acquiesced, and he said as follows: "To make a kabbalah to fast, indeed, I cannot do now. After the tzarah passes, I will not be holding in the same place, and I therefore cannot vouch that I will fulfill my kabbalah. What I can accept upon myself, however, is a kabbalah to eat! I hereby accept upon myself that from here on in, I will eat Melaveh Malka at the conclusion of Shabbos in the most mehudardige manner. I will wash for bread and have a seudah!"

That kabbalah marked a change in the hanhagah of that chassidus. Originally, the Bobover Rebbe had not held a tisch on Motzei Shabbos, and many of the chassidim had relied on fruits and the like as a fulfillment of the mitzvah of Melaveh Malka. After the War, the Rebbe began holding a tisch for Melaveh Malka, and his chassidim are careful to have a full-fledged meal for this seudah.

We, too, can take an example from the Bobover Rebbe, and adopt a resolution that will be practical and sustainable, while substantial at the same time.

Limud Mussar is Imperative

As we attempt to retain the *madreigos* of the Yamim Noraim for the rest of the year, we must bear in mind that without a regular program of *limud hamussar* alongside our *kabbalos*, our efforts are almost definitely doomed for failure. The reason for this can be explained with another *mashal*:

Ari had been having a problem with the battery of his car, so he brought it to the mechanic for a replacement. He left the mechanic with a brand-new battery, confident that he would now be able to drive unhindered for another long while. Much to his chagrin, only a few hours later, he

found himself in a break down a second time. He called the tow-truck company, who identified the problem as a dead battery.

"What?!" Ari cried in surprise. "You better check your battery checkers! I just got a brand-new battery. How could it have died so fast?"

The worker explained to Ari that having a new battery is not enough. Even the most powerful battery cannot sustain a car for more than a few hours. After that, even the best battery will die. The only way for a battery to power a car properly is if there is a working alternator that constantly recharges the battery.

Similarly, we can put in a tremendous *avodah* on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur so that we will walk away with a brand-new 'battery'. However, immediately after Yom Kippur, the process of the battery losing power begins. Perhaps our *madreigah* may last a few days – or at best, a few weeks – but soon, we will be exactly where we started. For many of us, this can happen just a few hours after Yom Kippur, or even minutes. It is imperative for us to 'recharge' ourselves, by learning and listening to *mussar*, and thus rekindling the flames that we attained on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. By doing this, there is hope that the *kabbalos* that we accepted can have a lasting impact, and that we will progress through the year in a better way than we did the previous year.

Seeking Methods of Tilting the Judgement in our Favor

Aside for the actual *teshuvah* that we must do in these days, we also need to seek other avenues of trying to secure for ourselves a favorable judgement. As the *seforim* teach us, the depth of the judgement is so vast, that if we would rely only upon our own merits, we would almost definitely not stand a chance. Dovid Hamelech says this concept in Tehillim as well. ואל תבוא במשפט את עבדך כי לא. [Hashem,] *Do not in judgement upon your servant, because no living being will be righteous in front of You!* It is therefore incumbent upon us to help our own judgement through other 'back-door' factors that will cause the scales to be tipped in our favor. What courses of action can we take in this vein? Various suggestions have been given by different *tzadikim* and *talmidei chachamim* of the generations, each one based on Chazal and highlighting a specific area which has the capacity to bring about a favorable judgement.

Chein – Finding Favor in Front of Hashem

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz used to emphasize the concept of *chein*/finding favor in the Eyes of HaKadosh Boruch Hu. As the passuk tells us at the end of Parshas Beraishis, ויאמר ה' אמהה את האדם /*And Hashem said, 'I will wipe out the man which I created from the face of the land...because I have reconsidered that I created them', and Noach found favor in the Eyes of Hashem.* The Gemara (סנהדרין ק"ה) infers from the passuk that Noach was also included in the decree, but he was spared because he found favor in the Eyes of Hashem.

Rav Chaim would stand at the *bimah* and cry, "Shlomo Hamelech says (משלי ל"א) שקר ההון ('Favor' is a falsehood. I, however, say that it [nevertheless,] saves us [from Hashem's strict judgement]!"

How does one acquire this *chein*? Rav Chaim would point to various *pessukim* or statements of Chazal which direct us in this regard. Two examples that he would mention are Torah and *anavah*/humility. Regarding Torah, the *passuk* refers to it as (משלי ה' י"ט) *It brings chein.* Regarding humility, the *passuk* says (משלי ג' ל"ד) *And to the humble he will give chein.* If we will work to improve our conduct in the areas of limud haTorah and humility, we are, like Noach, attaining the tremendous advantage of finding favor in Hashem's Eyes at the time of the judgement.

Overlooking the Wrongdoings of Others

My rebbe, Rav Chaim Brim, used to base his 'strategy' upon a different piece of advice that Chazal teach us. (ראש השנה י"ז) *Anyone who overlooks his own measures [of grudges against others' wrongdoings towards him], they will overlook all of his sins [in Shamayim].* As Rabbeinu Yonah (שע"ת שער א' אות כ"ח) writes, this is a significant opening of hope, even for those who have sinned greatly. We should concentrate on becoming 'easygoing' toward people. If another individual wrongs us, whether intentionally or accidentally, let it roll past us. We have certainly wronged others before, and we know that we did not mean it maliciously. Either we didn't mean it, or the *yetzer hara* simply got the better of us. Let us view others with the same merciful lens in which we view ourselves, and by doing this, we will be *zoche* *iy"H* to be viewed in this manner from *Shamayim*.

Loving and Caring for our Fellow Jews

In yet another angle, we can work on the love we feel toward our fellow Jews. I heard the following *pshat* from Reb Chuna Chaim Lebowitz: During the davening of Rosh Hashana, we say the words *אם כבנים אם כעבדים / Whether we are like children or like servants.* We daven to Hashem that in either form of our relationship with Him, He should have mercy on us – the implication clearly being that the relationship of a son is superior. Why is this so?

The obvious understanding of this is based upon the idea that the relationship of a father to a son is one of love, whereas a king or master may have compassion on his subjects, but generally not love. However, we may add the following difference as well. A son has siblings, while a servant does not. While a master may have many different servants, what is the relation between the servants themselves? The answer is that there is no relationship at all, because they are not connected to each other. Each servant is solely concerned about his own wellbeing and that the master should treat him kindly and fairly. What occurs with the other servants is not his concern.

Concerning children of a father, this is decidedly not the case. The children care for each other as well, because they recognize that as sons of one father, they themselves are related to one another. This care between themselves, in turn, arouses the mercies of the father. It is so meaningful and heartwarming to the father that his children care for each other, and on account of this, he himself extends greater mercy and kindness to them.

When we show love and concern for our fellow yidden, and we relate to them as our brothers and sisters, it is a tremendous *zechus* and cause for Heavenly Mercy.

The following *mashal* is given in *Seforim* to illustrate this idea:

A certain individual had sinned against the king, incurring the death penalty. As the man was being led to his execution, he came before the king with a plea.

"Your majesty the king," he began, "I understand that I have sinned greatly, and I accept upon myself the death penalty. However, please your majesty, think of my family at home. They will be completely helpless, with nowhere to turn. Let me just return home to arrange matters for them, so that they will have a way to continue after my death."

The king replied as follows. "Your request is a fair one, and I certainly do not wish to bring extra suffering upon your innocent family members. However, I cannot grant your request because I have no way of guaranteeing your return. Surely you will utilize the opportunity to escape to your freedom!"

The man begged the king to reconsider. He promised that he would find a guarantor who would agree to be killed in his stead, should he not return. The king could not believe that he would find such a person. The man, however, escorted by a guard, headed toward a friend with whom

he was extremely close. He returned to the king triumphantly, with this friend accepting to be the guarantor.

"I know your trick!" the king protested to the friend. "This criminal won't return, and when the time comes for you to be killed, you'll beg to be spared, arguing that you are innocent. If you accept this responsibility, it means that you will be killed, period. If your friend does not return in time, you are gone!"

The friend agreed, and permission was granted. As it turns out, the criminal did not return on time, and the friend was taken to be hanged. Just as the noose was around his neck and he was about to be killed, the criminal burst into the room.

"Stop!" he cried. "I have returned! Do not kill my innocent friend! I am the one who must be killed!"

The friend, however, objected. "No!" he said. "You did not return in time, and therefore you are free. I will be killed!"

At that point, they began arguing between themselves about who should die and allow his friend to live.

When the king witnessed this moving scene, he interjected. "Alright," he said, "I will grant you both freedom – but on one condition. The devotion that you have displayed to each other is a level of which I have never seen before between friends. Include me into your friendship!"

Similarly, when Hashem sees that we, yidden, are truly devoted to each other, Hashem will have mercy upon us when we return to Him, and we 'bring Hashem into our circle'.

Establishing a Keshet with HaKadosh Boruch Hu Himself כביכול

A final suggestion for what can be a *zechus* in the *din* is through developing a *keshet*, a relationship with HaKadosh Boruch Hu Himself כביכול. When we have a true *Ahavas Hashem*, Hashem has an *ahavah* back to us and desires to help us. Certainly, such a *keshet* carries with it a change in our lifestyle. We will begin to daven to Hashem with feeling and concentration, the way we speak to one whom we love. We will act in a manner that is 'sensitive' to the Will of Hashem, with *ehrlichkeit* and *aidelkeit*, because that is a manner which is pleasing to Hashem. Through living this way, Hashem will love us in return.

Iy"H we should all be *zoche* to find favor in HaKadosh Boruch Hu's Eyes, and be granted a *Gmar Chasima Tova*, for us and the entire Klal Yisroel.

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