

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על דשא

AL E DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Yearning for Shechinah

וְשָׁב ד' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ.

Hashem your G-d will return your captivity and have mercy upon you (Devarim 30:3).

Rashi comments that the pasuk could have written *והשיב את שבוּתך*, using the standard verb for returning something—rather than *וְשָׁב* which literally means, *He Himself will return*. Chazal (*Megillah* 29a) learned from here

You have granted significance to our meager Selichos, and regard them as if they are worthy pleadings before You.

that the Shechinah is with Klal Yisrael in exile and when they are redeemed Hashem himself *k'vayachol* returns with them.

Rabi Shimon bar Yochai elaborated on this, showing where pesukim indicate that the Shechinah was with Yisrael in Mitzrayim and in Bavel, and concluded: "Also, when they

are destined to be redeemed, the Shechinah will return with them."

The Gemara asks: Where was the Shechinah found in Bavel? Abaye said: "In the *beis haknesses* of Hutzal and in the *beis haknesses* that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharda'a."

The Maharsha points out that Hashem's presence is everywhere and, therefore, there should be no need to state that he was present in Mitzrayim and in Bavel, or to ask where His presence in Bavel was. Still—he explains—there are specific places, such as the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash, where the Shechinah reveals itself in a way that can be felt by anyone who is prepared to feel Hashem's presence. Chazal were teaching us that even in Mitzrayim and in Bavel there were specific places where the presence of the Shechinah was revealed.

The Maharsha then turns to the final statement of Rabi Shimon bar Yochai: *When they are destined to be redeemed, the Shechinah will return with them*. Surely when Klal Yisrael returned from *galus Bavel* the Shechinah returned as well. Why, then, does Rabi Shimon bar Yochai focus on the future redemption?

The Maharsha explains that when Klal Yisrael returned from *galus Bavel*, the

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The Power of Selichos

Tonight we begin to say Selichos. This is the common expression—"saying Selichos"—and we find this expression among *kadmonim* as well. It is worth reflecting on this expression. We need to stand before Hashem and beg and plead, not just "say" Selichos.

Certainly, this expression is not describing those who are just going through the outward motions without thinking. It applies even to elevated people who are mindful of what they are doing and aware that they need to plead to Hashem.

Rather the idea is that even if we are mindful of pleading with Hashem, we cannot grasp the distance between ourselves and the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and the enormity of our debt to Him. From this perspective, all of our Selichos may be considered just talk.

We say in *tefillas Ne'ilah*: אין קץ לאשי חובותינו, ואין מספר לניחוחי אשמתנו. ואתה יודע שאחריתנו רמה ותולעה, לפיכך הרבית סליחתנו. In this sentence we acknowledge the great debt that we have to Hashem and the great distance between mortal man and his Creator, and we explain: yet, *because of that*, הרבית סליחתנו, *You have increased our forgiveness*.

הרבית סליחתנו can also mean, *You magnified and elevated the Selichos which we say*. Because in reality we are too insignificant to plead with You, You have granted significance to our meager Selichos,

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Carrying Aveiros

We find in sefarim⁴ a *remez* to the month of Elul in the pasuk ואשר לא צדה והאלקים—*One who has not lain in ambush and Hashem has caused it to come to his hand, I shall provide a place* ... (Shemos 21:13). The first letters of the words אנה לידו ושמתי לך spell out Elul.

We can explain the hidden message contained in this *remez*, based on the words of the Berdichever in *Kedushas Levi*.⁵ He explains, the term נושא עון (Michah 7:18) means that when a Yid sincerely desires to do teshuvah,

Hashem carries his *aveiros*, taking the responsibility on Himself—Hashem says that He, *k'vayachol*, is the one who caused the *aveiros* by giving people a *yetzer hara*. We find this idea in the Gemara in *Berachos* (32b); Eliyahu Hanavi complained to Hashem that He caused Klal Yisrael to sin, and Hashem agreed when He said ואשר הרעותי—and the one whom I caused to be evil (Michah 4:6).

This is the message in the *remez* to Elul found in the words *and Hashem has caused it to come to his hand, I shall provide*

a place; when a person regrets his sins in Elul and does teshuvah, Hashem takes responsibility for causing him to sin, and provides him an escape from punishment. Of course, this applies to a person who does sincere teshuvah and wishes to be free of the influence of his *yetzer hara* so that he can devote himself to *avodas Hashem*. If that is what he wants, Hashem will *carry his aveiros* and forgive him.

ס"ג נצבים וילך תשפ"ה מאמר ב

4 Pri Eitz Chaim, *Sha'ar Rosh Hashanah* ch. 1.

5 Rosh Hashanah, *d"h b'gemara v'rav*.

Yearning for Shechinah

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Shechinah that had come to be revealed in the *beis haknesses* in Bavel remained there. We see this from the fact that in the lifetime of Abaye, who lived many centuries later, the *Shechinah* was still there. Only in the future, at the time of the final redemption, will the *Shechinah* be gathered from the places of *galus* and return to reside only in Eretz Yisrael.

Why, indeed, did the *Shechinah* remain in Bavel after the end of *galus Bavel*?

Rashi explains that *the beis haknesses that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharda'a* was built using stones and earth from Yerushalayim.

Building with these materials expressed a longing for Yerushalayim. The *Shechinah* rested there because it was a place of yearning. A yearning for holiness leaves a lasting impression.

This applies not only on a national scale but in the life of every individual. A Yid's longing for holiness and connection to Hashem are treasured in Heaven. Yearning for *Shechinah* brings to the presence of the *Shechinah*.

It happens that a person attempts to do teshuvah, but then falls back into old habits. Too often, this makes him lose hope of ever changing. He feels that since

he tried and failed, all of his efforts were in vain. Why should he try again?

We must know that no effort in serving Hashem is ever in vain. When someone desires to improve and become closer to Hashem, the desire itself leaves a lasting impression. Even if he fails to maintain his commitment and ends up returning to his old ways, his effort and desire are not wasted. They are treasured by Hashem, and leave a permanent impression on a person's heart. The accumulated efforts and longing will eventually give this person the ability to do complete teshuvah.

ס"ג נצבים וילך תשפ"ה מאמר ב

The Power of Selichos

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and regard them as if they are worthy pleadings before You.

In tonight's Selichos we say רצה עתירתם—*Accept their pleadings as they stand before you at night*. My father, the Pnei Menachem,¹ explained that *at night* is not only meant literally but also

figuratively, alluding to times of darkness and trouble.

It is not necessary to elaborate on the extent to which we are currently enveloped in such darkness. Both physically and spiritually we are enveloped in a thick darkness. We may be so absorbed in material pursuits that we

do not even feel to what extent we need to cry out רצה עתירתם בעמדם בלילות. But You, *Ribbono Shel Olam*, have *elevated our Selichos*.

May Hashem accept our *tefillos* with mercy and grant us a *kesivah v'chasimah tovah*.

מוצש"ק קודם סליחות תשפ"ד

1 Nitzavim 166.

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ד' אלקיכם...
לעבדך בבְּרִית ד' אלקיך... הנְּסִתָּרָת לַד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וְהַנִּגְלָת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם לְעֹשֹׂת...

You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d... to pass into a covenant of Hashem your G-d... (Devarim 29:9-11). The hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d, but

the prohibition of
lifnei iver by the
fact that provoking
sin introduces
abominations and
damaging things to the
world.

the revealed things are for us and for our children forever to carry out ... (Devarim 29:28).

From these pesukim we learn that Klal Yisrael entered a covenant in which every Yid accepted *arvus*, responsibility, for each other (*Sanhedrin* 42b). This includes the responsibility to prevent another Yid from sinning and, certainly, to avoid causing him to sin.

The Gemara in *Avodah Zarah* (6b) says: From where do we learn that a person may not extend a cup of wine to a *nazir*, or a limb severed from a living animal to *bnei Noach*? The pasuk states: *You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind* (*Vayikra* 19:14).

It is worth analyzing why, regarding a cup of wine to a *nazir* the Gemara uses the singular term *nazir*, while in regard to a limb from a living animal it uses the plural term *bnei Noach*. We can suggest four approaches to this.

The first is based on an insight of the Chazon Ish,² who explains the prohibition of *lifnei iver* by the fact that provoking sin introduces abominations and damaging things to the world. This makes *lifnei iver* a sin between a person and Hashem (Who objects to the effects of sin), rather than a sin between a person and his fellow man.

If we accept the reasoning of the Chazon Ish only in regard to causing a non-Jew to sin, but maintain that there is an element of *bein adam l'chaveiro* when causing a Yid to transgress an *aveirah*, because of the *arvus* that every Yid has for his fellow Yid, then we can explain as follows.

Regarding extending a cup of wine to a *nazir*, since this relates to a Yid, one is committing an offense against the individual *nazir* by causing him to sin. However, by giving a limb from a living animal to a non-Jew, the offense is not against the individual but against Heaven. The Gemara mentions the individual *nazir* in order to emphasize that it is an offense against him.

A second approach can be suggested based on Tosafos³ which says that the prohibition of extending forbidden food applies specifically to a *nazir*, because wine is not something one is accustomed to avoiding, and there is a concern that he might forget that it is prohibited to him, and drink it. Regarding food that is not kosher, there is no such concern.

In general, we have a rule that forgetting is not a concern among two or more people, as one is bound to remember and remind his friend. Accordingly, we can understand that the Gemara mentions *nazir* in the singular because the prohibition applies when extending a cup of wine to one single *nazir*, as opposed to two or more *nezirim*. However, regarding a non-Jew, there is a concern that he might

eat the prohibited meat intentionally, and therefore the prohibition applies even when dealing with more than one person.

Another approach can be suggested based on the Gemara in *Bava Kama* (38a) which says: when Hashem saw that the descendants of Noach did not keep the seven mitzvos they had accepted upon themselves, He permitted their prohibitions to them. The Gemara then explains that although they no longer receive reward for keeping these mitzvos, they are still punished for transgressing them, so that "sinners should not profit." Accordingly, we may say that the seven mitzvos of *bnei Noach* are no longer incumbent on each person as an individual, but rather as part of something which was once accepted by their nation. It is therefore appropriate, in the context of transgressing a prohibition, to mention *bnei Noach* as a group.

In these days of Elul, we can give a fourth answer based on a famous story of the Berdichever Rebbe. One Erev Pesach he searched the Jewish homes in the city for illegal merchandise and found some, but he did not find a crumb of *chametz* in any home. He then advocated before Hashem: "The fear of the government does not intimidate Your people, but the fear of Heaven is so strong upon them that no one possesses *chametz*." When discussing the transgression of Yid, the Gemara presents the case in singular form because it is not likely that more than one Yid will commit a transgression, whereas regarding *bnei Noach* it uses the plural form.

שיעור שנאמר בשבת חברותא וירחי כלה. כי תצא תשפ"ה

² Yoreh De'ah 62:7.

³ Avodah Zarah 6b d"h minayin.



Nitzavim- Vayeilech	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbos
Brooklyn	7:05	8:11
Lakewood	7:06	8:10
Baltimore	7:14	8:12
Chicago	6:58	8:00
North Miami	7:18	8:11
Los Angeles	6:56	7:51

Parshah Medley

There was an ancient minhag that during the days of Selichos, the *shamash* would go around the town while it was still dark to gather everybody to shul. He would carry a small hammer and knock on the windows or the doors to wake people from their sleep, calling them to rise for Selichos.

In the time of the Rebbe of Lublin, the local *shamash* would give three knocks at each house. The Rebbe asked him: "What are your thoughts while knocking which cause me to feel inspired? How do you succeed in arousing the hearts of all of the townspeople so that they find it impossible to continue sleeping?"

The *shamash* answered with simplicity: "I have no special *kavanos*, but my ancestors were also *shamashim*, and I have a tradition to knock three times in order to invoke the memory of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov." Upon hearing this, the Rebbe said that he now understood. The *zechus* of the Avos brings about the *hisorerus*.

The *zechus* of the Avos is something which we repeatedly mention in Selichos. Based on this story, we can say that before we come to ask Hashem to help us in the *zechus* of the Avos, we invoke their memory to shake us out of the spiritual slumber that burdens our everyday lives. After the memory of the Avos awakens our bodies and souls, we then have the ability to plead with Hashem for help in their *zechus*.

ס"ג נצבים וילך תשפ"ה מאמר ד

והבדילו ד' לרעה מכל שבטי ישראל כלל אלות הברית
הכתובה בספר התורה הזה.

Hashem will set him aside for evil from among all the tribes of Yisrael, like all the oaths of the covenant that is written in this Book of the Torah (Devarim 29:20).

Rashi points out that here while referring to *this sefer haTorah* the pasuk uses the masculine for *this*, הזה, while in a previous pasuk it says גם כל חלי וכל *Even any illness and any plague that is not written in this Book of the Torah* (Devarim 28:61), the pasuk uses the feminine for *this*, הזאת. Rashi explains that in the previous pasuk the word הזאת refers to the התורה, which is a feminine noun, while here the word הזה refers to the word ספר which is a masculine noun.

But why is it that here the pasuk speaks of the sefer, and previously, of the Torah?

We may explain this based on an insight of the Sefas Emes.⁶ He writes that all of the curses written in the Torah have a deeper meaning because the Torah is connected to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and nothing bad originates from Him. They appear to us as curses, but in essence they are good. This is why we find that *tzaddikim* interpreted the pesukim of the curses in positive ways.

Accordingly, the curses that are written in the sefer Torah are attributed to *the sefer*—to what is written—rather than to *the Torah* itself. Whereas the earlier pasuk discusses *any illness and any plague that is not written*. Regarding what is not written in the pasuk, we can talk about the Torah itself.

This Shabbos is the week that separates the *Tochachah* of *Parshas Ki Savo* from Rosh Hashanah and the new year. 'May the year and its curses be gone,' and may we merit only blessing.

ס"ג נצבים וילך תשפ"ה מאמר ג

6 Nitzavim 5632.

From the Desk of the Rosh Yeshivah

Excerpt from a letter:

Hashem is our Father Who loves us, and *tefillah* is always effective. From a human perspective, after offering more than '515 prayers,' one might feel there is no point in continuing. However, we do not always reach the level of 'a pauper's prayer' with its true *bittul* and the absolute recognition that Hashem alone provides. For this reason alone, it remains both worthwhile and necessary to keep davening. (And there are other reasons as well.)

May Hashem, 'Who hears the prayer of every mouth,' hear and accept your *tefillos* with *rachamim* and *ratzon*.

With Yom Tov blessings,

Shaul