

Parashas
Rosh Hashanah

• 752 •

א' תשרי תשפ"ז

5787

י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ

רבי גמליאל הכהן

רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

כרחם אב על בנים

As a Father has mercy on children

טיב המערכת

אם כבנים אם כעבדים

If as sons, as servants

Once, a button was torn from the garment of Maran the Chasam Sofer, zy"ta. The Chasam Sofer gave the garment to his daughter, asking her to see to it that it was repaired. When his daughter returned the repaired garment to her father, he said to her, "I know that you did not sew on the button." The daughter admitted and said, "Indeed, that is true. I did not sew on the button. Rather, I gave it to the maid to repair. But how did Father know that this was what happened?" The Chasam Sofer answered her: "Because on the side of the garment there is another small tear that I did not ask you to repair. I know with certainty that if you had sewn on the button, you would have noticed the additional tear and sewn that one as well. But that is not the way it is with the maid, because she does only what she is asked to do, and nothing more."

In the Tefillos of Rosh Hashanah, we ask several times in the tefillah of Hayom Haras Olam: "If as children, if as servants; if as children, have mercy upon us as a father has mercy upon his children, and if as servants..."

At first glance, we are asking Hashem to decide whether He wants to judge us as children or as servants. But perhaps there is something else here? Perhaps there is a deeper meaning? Perhaps we can "intervene" and influence His decision as to whether He should judge us as children or as servants?

Based on the story of the Chasam Sofer, we can explain that the choice is in our hands. The way we conduct ourselves toward Heaven is the way they will conduct themselves toward us: "If as children, if as servants." So where is the difference?

Our Father constantly looks at us to see whether we observe the Torah and mitzvos like children or like servants. Do we always arrive at the last moment for davening and run away at the first possible opportunity—or are we in the Beis HaKnesses and daven the entire prayer from beginning to end? Do we always arrive for Shabbos at the last moment, out of breath—or do we prepare early and welcome Shabbos calmly and peacefully? And there are many more examples like these that demonstrate to which side we belong.

It is true that there are many things, and it is difficult for us to change everything all at once. But at least now, as we stand at these fateful moments, let us accept upon ourselves one thing, one mitzvah, which we will fulfill with great care and without compromise, truly "as children and not as servants."

In this way, we will be able to ask in our tefillah, "Have mercy upon us as a father has mercy upon his children."

And may it be Hashem's will that we merit a kesiva v'chatima tova.

- Tiv HaMoadim – Rosh Hashanah

אם כבנים אם כעבדים

If as children, if as servants

Whose heart would not tremble and be filled with fear on this day, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu passes His flock beneath His staff like a shepherd inspecting his sheep? All that has been forgotten comes to the fore; the Books of Remembrance are opened and read on their own; all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him like the children of Maron; and HaKadosh Baruch Hu counts and numbers every living soul, determining the allotment for each of His creations and writing their verdict. Even the angels hasten and are seized with fear and trembling as they say, "Behold, it is the Day of Judgment."

This is not an ordinary and simple judgment. Our entire future for the coming year hangs in the balance, depending on the verdict that will emerge from the judgment of the Great Judge. Everyone longs to emerge innocent in judgment, to know that the verdict issued upon us will be for our good throughout the year. Therefore, we plead and beseech HaKadosh Baruch Hu: "Today is the birthday of the world, **today He will place all the creatures of the world in judgment, if as children, if as servants.** If as children, have mercy upon us as a father has mercy upon his children; and if as servants, our eyes are turned toward You until You show us favor and bring forth our judgment as light, O Awesome and Holy One."

It is true that we did not conduct ourselves as we should have. Nevertheless, we ask for mercy from the One whose attribute is mercy. For if we are children of the Omnipresent, then the father has mercy upon his son, and when a father judges his son, he judges him with mercy and kindness. He has mercy upon him on the Day of Judgment. But even if we have not merited being on the level of children, nevertheless, we turn our eyes upward and ask: "Please show me favor from the treasury of free gifts, and bring forth our judgment as light, O Awesome and Holy One."

Every Jew must strive to be on one of these levels: **a son or a servant.** The level of a son is certainly loftier than that of a servant, but even if we have not merited being a son, at the very least we must be a servant. For ultimately, the purpose of both of these levels is self-

nullification before *Kudsha berich Hu* and His Shechina, to be completely nullified like the dust of the earth. And one who nullifies himself merits mercy, as is explained in the holy *seforim*.

We can see the great importance of being a servant of Hashem from a story that was frequently told by the holy Rebbe, the author of the *Lev Simchah* of Gur, ztvk"l, concerning his grandfather, Maran the *Sfas Emes*, zy"a. Once, the *Sfas Emes* turned to his Chassidim and told them that while reciting Hallel, **when one says "Ana Hashem," one can ask for anything.** The Chassidim understood that he was referring to the *posuk*, "Ana Hashem hoshi'ah na"—"Please, Hashem, save us." But in truth, he was referring to the verse, **"Ana Hashem ki ani avdecha"**—"Please, Hashem, for I am Your servant."

נצח רחמי דבנוי לרחימו דדינא

The Love of His Children Prevails Over the Love of Judgment

We need to contemplate the matter carefully. The wording of "**Hayom Haras Olam**" implies that both the son and the servant stand in judgment for their sins. This is extremely puzzling. It is understandable that if a servant sins against his master, he must be brought to judgment and judged fairly. That is indeed the natural order of the world. But if a son sins against his father, the father will do everything possible to resolve the matter privately. He will send messengers to him with various offers and plead with him to return to him, and he will already seek to forgive his sins. The main thing is that the son should return to him. A father who brings his son to trial brings shame upon himself—it is a terrible disgrace and humiliation.

Unfortunately, I know personally of numerous cases of sons who strayed somewhat from the proper path, *Rachmana litzlan*. How much money and effort their fathers expend in attempting to bring them back to the proper path! Not through force or might, but through persuasion and reconciliation, because there is no other way. Only through peaceful and pleasant means can fathers win back the hearts of their sons. Why, then, would the Creator Yisbarach Shemo bring His beloved children to

judgment for their sins? Surely a father does not judge his son. Rather, he gives him gifts and makes every effort to win his heart and bring him back to mercy and favor. On the contrary, the weaker and more broken the son is, the more effort the father invests in appeasing him and calming his mind.

The truth is that the holy Zohar already writes this (Ra'aya Meheimna, Emor 99) that when HaKadosh Baruch Hu sits upon the Throne of Judgment on Rosh Hashanah, the Angel of Judgment stands at the entrance—unable to remain silent—and seeks to prosecute the Jewish people and speak badly of them. However, HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not heed him and rejects him completely, despite the fact that He loves judgment, as it is written (Yeshaya 61:8), **כי אני 'ה' אוהב משפט**—"For I, Hashem, love judgment." Nevertheless, He loves the Bnei Yisrael—His beloved children—even more. The love of the children overcomes the love of judgment until the latter is completely pushed aside before it.

This is the meaning of the words of the Zohar HaKadosh: **"The love of His children prevails over the love of judgment."**

It emerges from these words that HaKadosh Baruch Hu, in His great love for His beloved children, indeed exempts them completely from judgment.

אם כבנים רחמנו ואם כעבדים עינינו תליות

If as Children, Have Mercy; and if as Servants, Our Eyes Are Turned Toward You

HaGaon HaKadosh, author of the *Noda B'Yehudah*, writes in his *derashos* (*Derushei Tzlach*, Drush 12 for the first day of Selichos) something most remarkable, based on the well-known Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Emor 29:3): **"G-d has ascended with a teruah, Hashem with the sound of the shofar" (Psalms 47:6)...** **When Israel take their shofars and blow before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, He rises from the Throne of Judgment and sits upon the Throne of Mercy,** as it is written, 'Hashem with the sound of the shofar.' He becomes filled with mercy for them, has compassion upon them, and transforms the attribute of judgment into mercy."

Why, indeed, does HaKadosh Baruch Hu rise from the Throne of Judgment and

move to the Throne of Mercy? Until that point, Israel had repented only out of fear—the fear of punishment. However, when Israel hear the sound of the shofar, they are awakened to repentance out of love. For this is the purpose of the shofar: to awaken a person to genuine repentance, as the Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance (3:4): "Although the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a decree of the Torah, there is a hint contained within it, meaning: 'Awake, you sleepers from your sleep, and you slumberers, awaken from your slumber. Search your deeds, return in repentance, and remember your Creator.'"

Therefore, HaKadosh Baruch Hu initially sits upon the Throne of Judgment, because when Israel repent out of fear, they are considered like servants of the King who serve their master in order to receive reward. It is fitting that the King should judge His servants, for "The King establishes the land through judgment." However, after we have heard the sound of the shofar and merited repenting out of love, we then rise from the level of servant to the level of son. For **אנו כי בניך ואתה אבינו**—"We are Your children and You are our Father." At that very moment, HaKadosh Baruch Hu leaves the Throne of Judgment and sits upon the Throne of Mercy, because a father does not judge his children. On the contrary, he has mercy upon them and bestows upon them all that is good.

Based on this, the *Noda B'Yehudah* beautifully explains the wording of the tefillah, "Hayom Haras Olam." Today—Rosh Hashanah—is the Day of Judgment. According to this, however, we must wonder: **היום יעמיד במשפט כל יצורי 'עולמים**—"Today He will place all the creatures of the world in judgment"?! How can this be? Surely a father does not judge his son, and the Jewish people are indeed children of the Omnipresent! The *paytan* therefore resolves the matter: Indeed, not everyone stands in judgment in the same manner. Rather, **"if as children, if as servants."** This depends greatly upon the state of the person being judged: Is he a son or a servant? **"If as children"**—if the person being judged is a son, having repented out of love, then **"have mercy upon us as a father has mercy upon his children."** He merits mercy from his Father, and He exempts him from judgment. But **"if as servants"**—if this person has not repented out of love, and he is not a

son but rather a servant, then in such a situation he cannot escape the judgment of the King. He has no other recourse except: **עֵינֵינוּ לְךָ תְּלוּיֹת עַד שְׁתַּחֲנוּנוּ וְתוֹצִיא** - **“Our eyes are turned toward You until You show us favor and bring forth our judgment as light.”**

מען ליהט זיך א טאטע

One Can Borrow a Father

From all this we learn that indeed, one who repents out of love rises to the level of a son and exempts himself from judgment. At the same time, however, not everyone who desires can simply take this crown for himself. Not everyone is capable of repenting out of love, which is a very lofty level, as is well known. The advice in such a case is to awaken within ourselves, with great strength, the point of being a son—to pray to Hashem and plead with Him, to speak to Him as a son speaks to his father. Then the aspect of “Father” above will also be awakened, and the son will enter before his Father.

This is similar to the well-known story told by the holy Rebbe of Shinova (*Divrei Yechezkel*, Haftorah of Parshas Masei): Once, the holy Rebbe Reb Elimelech, zy”a, announced that knowing the holy Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was a segulah for fear of Heaven. When the holy Rabbi Elazar of Lizhensk heard his father’s words, explicitly spoken by such a great man, he arose and traveled to Koretz to participate in the tefillos and holy tisches of the tzaddik of Koretz.

In the middle of the tisch, Rabbi Elazar became inspired with a profound fear of Heaven, and the cry **“Tatte!”** escaped from his lips.

Rabbi Pinchas’l responded to him and said, **“And perhaps he is not your father?”** In other words: Who says that you are on the level of a son, such that you are able to call HaKadosh Baruch Hu “Tatte”?

Rabbi Elazar heard this and did not respond.

When Rabbi Elazar returned home, his holy father wanted to know what had happened there. In the course of telling him about the experience, he also related this incident.

“What did you answer him?” asked Rebbe Reb Elimelech.

“I did not answer anything. I remained silent.”

Rebbe Reb Elimelech said to him: “You should have answered him based on the *posuk* (Ha’azinu 32:7), **‘שאל אביר’** -

‘Ask your father.’ The word *sha’al* means ‘borrow.’ **One can borrow a father.**”

In other words, even if for the moment we are not on the level of children of the Omnipresent, and we are not worthy of having HaKadosh Baruch Hu called “Father” to us, nevertheless, it is possible to receive this level on loan, by strongly calling out to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, **“You are my Father.”** In this merit, one will eventually merit being worthy of this title truthfully.

בין כך ובין כך נקראים בנים

In Either Case, You Are Called Children

It is well known that the holy tzaddikim would find merit on behalf of the Jewish people, even at times when they were not worthy of being called children. But ultimately, “even though a Jew has sinned, he remains a Jew,” and certainly, considering the situation of the generation and the trials we face, every Jew is worthy of being called a son. How much more so are the Jewish people precious when compared with the nations of the world and the peoples of the earth.

Although Rabbi Yehudah maintains (Kiddushin 36a) that the Jewish people are called children only when they do the will of the Omnipresent, Rabbi Meir disagrees and maintains: **“In either case, you are called children.”**

The Rashba already ruled in his responsa (Vol. I, nos. 194 and 242) that in this matter we follow the opinion of Rabbi Meir, even though in disputes between Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir the halacha generally follows Rabbi Yehudah, because the *posukim* of the Torah appear to support Rabbi Meir.

There is a well-known story concerning the holy **Be’er Mayim Chaim**, zy”a, who had a son who did not follow the proper path, as would have been expected of the son of such a great and holy man. Despite the tremendous pain and anguish that his son’s actions caused him, his holy father did not distance him from himself. On the contrary, he fed him from his own bread, gave him to drink from his own water, and provided all his needs with great generosity—no less than he would have done for an important and proper son who brought much satisfaction to his parents and teachers.

Every day, when that tzaddik would

rise to *daven*, he would first turn to our Father in Heaven and say: “Ribono shel Olam” - “Master of the Universe, please look at me and see: Although my son causes me pain through his conduct and his ways, nevertheless I withhold nothing from him. I take care of all his needs, and his entire livelihood is my responsibility. If I, who am nothing more than flesh and blood, behave this way toward my son, how much more so must You, the King of kings, behave this way toward Your merciful children, the Jewish people! Even though they do not do Your will as they should, nevertheless, **as a father has mercy upon his children**, You must bestow upon them all good forever, so that they lack nothing.”

In this way, the *Be’er Mayim Chaim*, zy”a, taught a defense on behalf of the Jewish people.

But we cannot rely upon this alone. Rather, we must strive with all our strength and yearn to be called children of the Omnipresent. At the very least, we must cry out **“Tatte, Tatte”** until He truly becomes our Father. For ultimately, this is our genuine aspiration. The only reason we have not reached this level is because of the trials of our generation and the circumstances of the times which pull us toward materialism.

As the Gemara says in Berachos (17a): “Master of the Universe, **it is revealed and known before You that our will is to do Your will**. And what prevents us? The leaven in the dough and the subjugation of the kingdoms.”

HaKadosh Baruch Hu indeed knows the inner desire that exists within every single Jew. He also knows that the *yetzer* that tempts us attempts to draw our hearts toward itself, as it says, **‘כי הוא ידע יצרנו זכור כי עפר אנחנו’** - **“For He knows our inclination; He remembers that we are dust”** (Tehillim 103:14). However, through repentance and good deeds, may we soon merit becoming children of the Omnipresent, and **as a father has mercy upon his children**, may we merit a good and blessed year, filled with great mercy and revealed kindness.

In Shulchan Aruch (Hilchos Rosh Hashanah 583:1), the Rama rules: "There are those who have the custom to eat a sweet apple dipped in honey (Tur), and they say: '... that You renew for us a sweet year' (Avudraham), and so is the custom."

The holy sefer Ohr Hameir explains the intention behind this custom (Derush L'Rosh Hashanah):

"This matter is a meaningful sign. The earlier Sages instituted that at the beginning of the meal on Rosh Hashanah one should eat a sweet apple in honey and say, 'Renew upon us a good and sweet year,' along with the other symbolic foods established by Chazal."

He explains that the intent is as follows, "That Hashem should renew within us a pure heart, to understand and perceive in the coming year how to sweeten all judgments at their root. One should not seek to sweeten matters for his own personal comfort, but rather to alleviate the pain and exile of the Shechinah, that no suffering should reach Her, chas veshalom. Such a year is called a 'good year.'"

And this is the precise meaning of the words נְשַׁחֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ — "that You renew for us" — referring to the Shechinah that rests above our heads: "A good and sweet year" — meaning that we should merit to sweeten the judgments at their root and lessen the suffering caused to the Shechinah because of us.

He further connects this to the prayer וְיִקְבְּלוּ גְּלָם אֶת עַל: as follows: וְעַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לָךְ מִלְכוּתְךָ — "that all should accept upon themselves the yoke of Your kingship" — meaning the burden borne by the Kingdom Above.

The Ohr HaMeir continues with a powerful warning regarding the preciousness of Rosh Hashanah:

"Now, on Rosh Hashanah, a person may not allow himself even the slightest moment of idleness, for one minute moment of Rosh Hashanah contains within it much of the coming year. If one has a headache, that ache spreads through many days and weeks included within that moment and hour, just as a headache spreads throughout the limbs. Thus, if one sits silently and inactive even for a slight moment on Rosh Hashanah, he loses immense goodness."

The holy avodah of Maran the Vayoe! Moshe of Satmar zt"l, on Rosh Hashanah was performed with tremendous messirus nefesh. The Yamim Nora'im in Satmar were exalted and sanctified beyond description. The holy Rebbe himself would lead the prayers, pouring out his heart like

טיב המעשיות

Sweetening the Judgments at Their Source

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
שֶׁתַּחֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וְמְתוּקָה

"May it be Your will, Hashem our God and God of our forefathers, that You renew for us a good and sweet year."

water.

His famous discourses, renowned far and wide, were delivered with lofty and fiery awakening. With a voice that hewed flames of fire, he melted Jewish hearts, and the inspiration in his beis midrash surged powerfully. All who were connected to him returned in complete repentance before their Father in Heaven.

One year, in the beis midrash of our master in the city of Satmar in Hungary, the entire holy congregation stood prepared for the great moment of tekias shofar, the blowing of the shofar. They readied themselves with trembling, through prayers and the recitation of passages from the holy Zohar customarily said before the blasts.

Suddenly, silence descended upon the beis midrash. The holy Rebbe entered to deliver the special discourse before the shofar blowing. His appearance resembled that of a heavenly angel — entirely clothed in white — and the awe of the Day of Judgment rested visibly upon the noble radiance of his holy countenance.

He approached the lectern, kissed the curtain of the aron kodesh, and then began to speak with feelings of awe and dread of judgment, mingled with boundless love for the Jewish people.

"My masters and teachers," his pleasant voice strengthened, "allow me to present before you a fitting parable, so that you may understand what stands before us on this day."

Thus did the holy Rebbe relate his parable:

There once was a great and wise king whose kingdom prospered greatly. Out of his goodness and kindness he bestowed abundant beneficence upon all the people and ruled his kingdom with strength and dignity.

One day, however, the inhabitants of a certain city sinned against the king and violated the laws of the kingdom. A severe judgment now awaited them, one that threatened to impose crushing fines and bitter punishments

upon them.

The people of the city were beside themselves with fear. How could they possibly be saved from such terrible judgment? The laws of the kingdom were strict and uncompromising, and one who rebelled against the crown was surely punished. Who could overturn the decree of royal justice?

Yet one possibility still remained. For it was known that the king himself possessed the authority to grant a royal pardon. Even if every judge unanimously ruled guilty and no defense whatsoever could be found, nevertheless the king himself could, by the authority of the kingdom, pardon whomever he desired and rescue the condemned from destruction.

But there was a problem! The king, being upright and faithful to the laws of his realm, did not distribute pardons casually. After all, these laws existed for the benefit and preservation of the kingdom itself. Punishing offenders was necessary for maintaining royal order. Therefore, obtaining a pardon from the king was exceedingly difficult.

The townspeople therefore went to consult one of the royal ministers in their city — a loyal servant and beloved confidant of the king, who knew him intimately and understood his nature and preferences.

"Advise us!" they begged him. "By what means can we appease the king and obtain his pardon?"

"Your request is extraordinarily difficult," replied the minister. "With what can you appease the king? What gift could you possibly present before him? Even if you gathered vast treasures of gold, silver, and precious jewels, he has no need for them, for his storehouses contain far more than anything you could bring."

The minister pondered with them, searching for something they possessed that might truly delight the king. Suddenly, he remembered. There existed a certain rare and extraordinary beverage, exceedingly difficult to obtain, whose taste was especially beloved to the king — and of this drink the king possessed very little.

The minister exclaimed: "If you can obtain this beverage and present it before the king as a gift of affection, then the moment he tastes it, it will delight him greatly. I assure you that he will become appeased and favorable toward you and grant your request."

"One thing I ask of you" added the minister, "is that when the king asks who gave you such wise counsel, mention my name to him. Tell him that I advised you to bring this drink because I know how beloved it is to

him. For I too have sinned before the king and need reconciliation. When he hears that I sent you with this cherished drink, he will likewise become favorable toward me."

"So too," explained the holy Rebbe, "is the matter with Klal Yisrael when they seek counsel for how to merit acquittal on the Day of Judgment. We all know too well our true condition. If strict justice alone were applied, we could not emerge innocent in judgment. But there remains one path: to seek the King's mercy and plead for a royal pardon from the attribute of Chanun — the Compassionate One.

"Yet what can we possibly offer before the King of kings, the Master of the universe? Does He lack anything? If you are righteous, what can you give Him?"

"But," thundered the Rebbe, "I reveal to you today that there exists one unique and precious 'drink' that is exceedingly treasured by the King. That drink is tears. When a Jew opens his heart and pours forth tears like water before the King, there is no drink more beloved than this. לְקַרְבֵּי ה' קָרָאיוּ לְכָל אִשְׂרָי: יִקְרָאֵהוּ בְּאֵמֶת - Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him sincerely (Tehillim 145:18).

"When one presents before Him this beloved beverage, the King immediately becomes appeased and grants pardon."

Then the holy Rebbe raised his voice in weeping and supplication: "One thing I ask of you: since I too have sinned before the King, and I too desperately seek to become reconciled before Him — please also mention me in your sincere prayers before the King, and bless me too.

"For I am the one who gave you this counsel today and aroused you to open this treasured beverage and bring it before the King's table. May I too be saved together with you through the power of the prayers of the multitude."

The holy congregation burst into bitter weeping. The awakening stirred by this discourse swept through the entire beis midrash.

And with that great arousal, the holy Rebbe approached the sacred avodah

הספד שנכבש את ה'שולחן השבת'
ובם את המלמדים והמחנכים

טיב המעשיות

על פרשיות השבוע

מאת הגד"צ רבי גמליאל הכהן רבינוביץ שליט"א

קו ההוצאת לכל ספרי 'עבן טיב': 0735-22-76-09
מחלקת מכירות • מזמינים • מקבלים ללא עלות דמי משלוח!

א"י	הפצה מרכז הספרים בנהלת הרב יצחק פרידמן	03-6194114
חו"ל	הפצה שירה ארצות הברית	718-871-8652

ניתן להשיג גם בחנויות הספרים

of tekias shofar b'dichilu u'rechimu — with awe and love — pouring out his heart like water, to elevate the King from the Throne of Judgment to the Throne of Mercy.

I once heard a piercing saying from one of the great men, containing the power to awaken the deepest chords of the heart and soul.

During these holy and awe-filled days, as we stand at the threshold of the great Day of Judgment of Rosh Hashanah, upon which we are required to give a detailed and exact accounting for all the deeds of the entire past year — it is not so necessary specifically to study works of mussar in order to awaken the heart to repentance. It is sufficient for a person simply to review all the days of the passing year and its events.

When he opens the calendar of the concluding year and leafs through the days, examining how and with what he spent the days and the hours — "and every moment You examine him" — his heart will automatically become filled with trembling, fear, and dread.

The holy Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zt"l, author of Pri Ha'aretz, ascended to the Holy Land in his later years and settled in the holy city of Teveriah, as is well known. There he established his dwelling, together with a large community of several hundred

chassidim who accompanied him.

At that time, the overwhelming majority of the residents of Teveriah were from the Sephardic communities, headed by one of the great rabbanim of the generation known as the Chacham Bashi, who rejoiced greatly over the arrival of the tzaddik to dwell honorably in their city.

The Chacham Bashi therefore requested of the holy Rebbe that at their upcoming communal gathering he honor them with his participation before the assembled multitudes, for it would serve as a tremendous strengthening and awakening. The Rebbe respectfully accepted the invitation and said that he would endeavor indeed to attend the gathering.

The assembly in question was scheduled for one of the days of the month of Elul, and a distinguished delegation from the community came to the Rebbe's holy abode and conveyed to him all the details

of the invitation — the location of the gathering, the appointed day, and so forth. The Rebbe received them with great honor befitting their lofty stature, and said that he would endeavor to participate in their holy assembly.

How deeply disappointed, however, were the leaders of the community — with the Chacham Bashi at their head — when on the day of the gathering Rav Mendel did not appear and did not participate together with them.

Several days later, the Chacham Bashi met the holy Rebbe on his way to the beis haknesses and asked him about the reason for his absence from the assembly.

"Believe me upon my word of honor," answered the tzaddik, "that during these holy and awe-filled days, I do not find within myself even a single free moment! I simply could not, in any manner whatsoever, find the time to divert myself to other matters aside from occupying myself with the sacred labor of the service of these days.

"And as proof of this I tell you: even if I were now to see lying upon the street before me a treasure of sparkling and radiant jewels — I would not find within myself the time even to bend down and pick it up from the ground..."

Rav Avraham Mordechai Breitstein zt"l, the esteemed scribe of the great Eidah Chareidis beis din of Yerushalayim, related to me that he served for many years as the

tokei'a for Maran Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik of Brisk zt"l.

Every single year before the Yamim Nora'im, the Rav would summon him and ask whether he would be able to blow shofar for him again that year, and whether he was fully proficient and knowledgeable in the laws and practice of the shofar blasts.

He would test him anew each year, carefully verifying whether he indeed possessed mastery and understanding in the wisdom of the tekios, and whether his blasts were acceptable to him.

During the famous flight of the holy Rebbe of Ruzhin zt"l, from the terror of the Czar of Russia, who pursued him relentlessly, as he journeyed toward Austria to the city of Sadigura, he passed through the great city of Lemberg. There the Rebbe became extremely weakened from the tremendous flight during which they had been forced constantly to flee for their lives, as is well known, and he required a physician to examine and treat him. After some inquiry, they learned of a trustworthy Jewish doctor living in Lemberg, and brought him before the Rebbe.

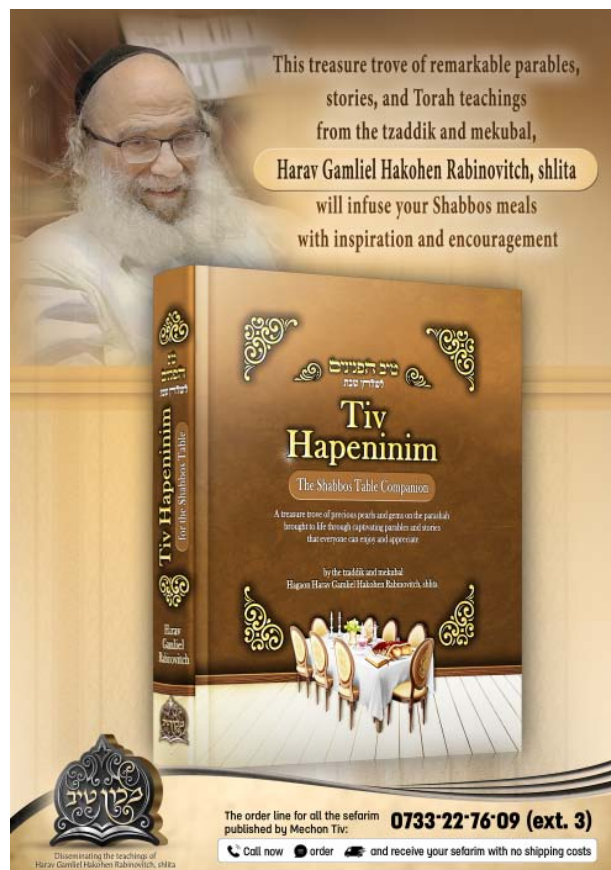
When the physician entered and beheld the radiant holy countenance of the tzaddik, he was overcome with fear and powerful emotion, to the point that he could barely open his mouth to speak.

One of the attendants from the local residents then told the Rebbe that this physician was a grandson of the Rebbe Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk zt"l, author of No'am Elimelech.

The Rebbe rejoiced greatly at meeting the grandson of that exalted tzaddik, and turned to the physician asking whether perhaps he knew any story concerning the holy greatness of his saintly grandfather. But the physician, due to his intense awe and excitement before the majestic holiness of the tzaddik, was unable to utter a word.

The holy Rebbe then said, "If so, I shall tell you a story of the greatness of a tzaddik."

The Rebbe began to recount that once, on the great and awesome day of Rosh Hashanah, the congregation waited an exceedingly long time for the Rebbe to emerge for the shofar blowing. After much time had passed and the Rebbe still had not appeared, the disciples discussed among themselves that perhaps one of them should enter the holy chamber to see what was delaying



the Rebbe.

But out of tremendous fear and awe of holiness, none of the disciples agreed to enter the Rebbe's room at such an exalted and sublime hour. Throughout the entire year they stood in awe before his holiness — all the more so during the supreme moment of the shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah.

They therefore cast lots among the disciples, and the lot fell upon two of the greatest among them: Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov zt"l, and the holy Apta Rav zt"l.

With no alternative, the two disciples quietly entered the room of the holy Rebbe and found him lying upon his bed, while from his holy eyes streamed an ocean of tears as he wept incessantly.

Rav Mendel of Rimanov was seized with terrible fear at the sight and immediately wished to flee outside, but the Apta Rav restrained him.

They understood well the awesome scene before them: the holy Rebbe was laboring and pleading for the annulment of harsh decrees, and therefore he delayed until he would succeed in arousing heavenly mercy for their nullification.

The Apta Rav strengthened himself courageously and approached the Rebbe, saying: "Listen, we, the faithful disciples, accept upon ourselves to assist the Rebbe through our prayers for the annulment of the evil decrees."

The moment the Rebbe heard this,

he rose with strength and immediately entered the beis midrash for the shofar blowing. Indeed, that gathering was one of overwhelming awe and terror, and during the Mussaf prayer of that year the disciples exerted themselves tremendously together with their holy master in those awesome prayers.

After the prayers, the Rebbe's face shone brightly. He blessed the entire congregation with great joy and said that through the efforts of the holy disciples those decrees had indeed been annulled, and that it would be a good and sweet year for the House of Yisrael.

How deeply we must cleave at all times to fulfilling "the will of Hashem," keeping His commandments, and bringing pleasure before Him, can be learned from the following incident.

This story was related to me by the grandson of Maran Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher zt"l, Raavad of the Eidah Chareidis and rav of the Zichron Moshe neighborhood in Jerusalem.

Thus he related: The volumes of Mishnah Berurah belonging to the gaon and tzaddik were filled on every side and in every margin with countless notes and glosses.

One day, while the grandson was arranging the many sefarim upon the table and saw these blessed "treasures" written in the margins of the Mishnah Berurah, he asked to his grandfather if he could photocopy all these pages so that an additional copy would exist and they could later be properly arranged and edited. [Today, baruch Hashem, we have merited the light of those great writings, and the Mishnah Berurah has indeed been printed together with all these wondrous glosses.]

The grandson asked whether his grandfather wished first to review the annotations and comments once again to determine whether they were suitable for editing and publication.

The grandfather immediately replied: "There is absolutely no need for that. I have already reviewed all these comments many times over, and I already know them by heart!"

The grandson then said, "If so, I shall take the sefarim now in order to photocopy all these pages together with the notes and annotations."

The grandfather asked, "And when will you return my Mishnah Berurah to

me?"

"I hope, with Hashem's help, to finish the work by this afternoon," answered the grandson.

When the gaon heard this response, he cried out in alarm, "How can you leave me for half a day without my Mishnah Berurah? Here it is written how one fulfills the will of Hashem at every moment! How can I possibly remain for half a day without knowing what the will of Hashem is from me?"

"If so," said the grandson, "I will hurry to do it right now and endeavor to return the sefarim immediately!"

This teaches us to what extent the tzaddikim demanded of themselves to fulfill constantly and meticulously the commandments and will of Hashem.

After all, Rav Fisher zt"l, knew the entire Mishnah Berurah by heart, and even testified concerning himself that he remembered all his annotations and comments. Nevertheless, he was incapable of remaining without those holy volumes, which stood constantly upon his table, so that he could always know and understand the mitzvah he was to perform — to bring pleasure before the Borei Yisbarach.

Top of Form

One of the disciples of the holy Baal Shem Tov zy"a, once came before him seeking guidance, asking to be taught the proper path in overcoming the desire for food. [As is discussed at length in the sefarim of mussar and chassidus, that a person must break the lust of physical indulgence, so that his eating should become holy. Indeed, the holy Rav Aahron Rotte zt"l, even authored an entire work on this subject, entitled Shulchan Hatahor, concerning the avodah of "a man's table atones for him."]

The Baal Shem Tov sent him to two Jews, from whom he would be able to learn the ways of this avodah. The first was the holy Rav Michel, maggid of the holy community of Zlotchov, renowned for his righteousness. The second was a simple, unlearned Jew, innocent and unsophisticated, known as "Reb Chaim."

First, the disciple traveled to Zlotchov and requested to stay in the home of Reb Michel. Naturally, he was received joyfully. Reb Michel was delighted by the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim that had come his way. Yet he immediately apologized that, due to his extreme poverty, his home was almost entirely bare, and he lacked the means to honor him properly with fine food and drink. But the visitor insisted that this was

precisely the house that found favor in his eyes, and that he required neither food nor comfort — only a quiet place to rest for several days before continuing onward.

Reb Michel agreed to host him, saying that he would gladly share with him the little bread and water that he possessed.

Naturally, the disciple carefully observed Reb Michel's conduct, particularly his manner of eating. As he witnessed the greatness of his avodah in this area, he was deeply moved and astonished.

Reb Michel's table was broken and rickety, nearly collapsing. Owing to the crushing poverty in the home, there was scarcely anything to eat. Whenever Reb Michel sat down once a day for his meager meal, he would sigh and groan with a broken heart.

During one of the meals, the disciple wished to understand these sighs and groans, especially at meal time. Since the entire purpose of his journey was to learn the avodah of eating, he finally gathered courage and asked Reb Michel directly why every time he sat down to eat he appeared so pained and distressed.

When Reb Michel saw that his intentions were sincere and upright, and that he truly sought the paths of truth, he opened his heart before him.

"Chazal taught (Berachos 55a), 'It states (Yechezkel 41:22), *הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֵץ נְשֹׁלֵשׁ אַמּוֹת, גְּבוּהָ וְיָדָבָר* - The altar was of wood, three cubits high, and further it states, *וְאָלָיו יָזָה הַשֵּׁלֶחֶן אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי ה'* - And he spoke to me, This is the table that is before Hashem.' It begins with the altar and concludes with the table. Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar both said: As long as the Beis Hamikdash stood, the altar atoned for Yisrael. Now, a man's table atones for him.

"Chazal thus compared the table to the altar. Therefore, whenever I approach this table and contemplate the altar of Hashem, broken and destroyed, my heart shatters within me over the terrible pain of the holy Shechinah, whose glory lies cast in the dust.

"For this reason, I deliberately keep this broken and unstable table, although members of the community have many times wished to purchase for me a new and elegant one. For how can I sit at a magnificent table while the altar corresponding to it lies shattered and crushed, its service abolished?

"And even regarding the meal itself, I cannot bring to my table more than a little dry bread and measured water, now that all the offerings — the *אִשֶּׁה יָרִיחַ* - the fire-offering, a pleasing fragrance unto Hashem — have ceased

from us.

"Whenever a Jew sits at 'a man's table,' he must contemplate the state of the altar that corresponds to that table, and his heart should fill with pain, sharing in the suffering of the Shechinah in exile."

After a short period living in Reb Michel's home and participating in all his meals, the disciple felt as though every trace of physical craving for food had been broken within him. He could barely bring himself to place food into his mouth. Reb Michel had elevated and uplifted him to a sublime level in the avodah of eating with holiness and purity.

After completing his learning of this avodah in the company of the tzaddik of Zlotchov, he packed his belongings and thanked his host wholeheartedly, especially for agreeing to teach him the proper manner in which a Jew should eat.

He now set his face toward the town to which his master, the Baal Shem Tov, had sent him — to the Jew known as Reb Chaim.

Upon arriving, he inquired after a Jew by that name. At first, the townspeople did not understand whom he meant. Seeing before them a distinguished talmid chacham of noble appearance, they assumed he was searching for one of the town rabbanim or respected scholars. But after further inquiry, he was directed to a very simple Jew named Reb Chaim, who lived at the edge of town.

The disciple immediately went to the house and found Reb Chaim at home. He discovered an exceedingly simple fellow — large, broad, powerful, and physically imposing. He presented his request to spend Shabbos in their home.

The Jew laughed at the strange request. "What have you found in me?" he said. "Why waste your Shabbos staying with a simple man like myself? There are several wealthy homeowners here in town who would gladly host you. There you could enjoy the company of important Torah scholars as well, and have a proper oneg Shabbos!"

But the visitor pleaded insistently that this particular home found favor in his eyes, being quiet and modest, far from noise and commotion. He preferred to stay peacefully with a simple Jew rather than in a house crowded with guests.

Reb Chaim finally agreed. "Well then, if you truly prefer our home, we would be honored to receive such an important guest for Shabbos."

Reb Chaim and his wife prepared for him a pleasant and spacious room and busied themselves with preparations

for Shabbos.

The disciple noticed that they labored tremendously over the Shabbos cooking, setting enormous pots filled with fine dishes upon the fire. He wondered for whom such gigantic quantities were being prepared and waited expectantly to discover why the Baal Shem Tov had specifically sent him here.

Friday afternoon, after returning from the mikveh, the host invited him to partake in the to'ameha meal of Erev Shabbos.

The disciple assumed they would serve only a small "bite," as is customary among Jews, so that one should not enter Shabbos hungry, as mentioned in the Poskim. But very quickly he discovered that this was an enormous and lavish feast. The host received multiple overflowing portions of meat, fish, and every delicacy imaginable.

The disciple marveled inwardly. "Throughout the entire Shabbos," he thought, "I do not eat even a third of what is being consumed now — and this is only the to'ameha buffet. He could only imagine what the actual Shabbos meals would be like!

Indeed, his expectations proved correct. The Shabbos meals in Reb Chaim's home were conducted on a colossal scale. At every course, the host continued eating and eating, until the disciple could no longer comprehend how a human being could possibly absorb such quantities.

After such an overwhelming Shabbos, the disciple felt that one could easily fast an entire week afterward. Yet soon his host respectfully invited him to the Melaveh Malkah meal.

When the disciple expressed amazement — how could one possibly eat another meal so soon after Seudah Shelishis, which itself had resembled the banquet of Shlomo Hamelech? — the host looked at him in bewilderment, as though he did not understand the question at all.

"What has one to do with the other?" he asked aloud. "What connection is there between Melaveh Malkah and Seudah Shelishis? This is Melaveh Malkah and that is Seudah Shelishis! A Jew must eat Seudah Shelishis and also Melaveh Malkah, just as he must daven both Shacharis and Minchah!"

The Melaveh Malkah meal in Reb Chaim's home was conducted with grandeur and splendor. Many fresh delicacies had been specially prepared in honor of the meal. The man sat eating as though he had never tasted food in his life. By now the disciple understood that the entire manner and quantity of eating in this home was utterly beyond

his comprehension.

While he himself could barely manage to taste a morsel, the host continued eating plate after plate, enormous servings one after another.

The Secret of the Massive Meals

The disciple sensed that some hidden reason lay behind this excessive eating. Surely the Baal Shem Tov had not sent him here without cause.

Yet despite all his observation, he could discern no visible avodah in the eating. At first he had wondered whether perhaps this was a hidden tzaddik concealing lofty holiness beneath physical behavior. But after studying him carefully, he saw nothing outwardly remarkable about the man besides his immense appetite, which certainly left its mark upon him.

Finally, having no alternative, he posed the question directly. "Tell me, Reb Chaim," the disciple suddenly asked during Melaveh Malkah, "why do you eat so much? How are you capable of consuming such enormous quantities?"

Reb Chaim appeared startled by the directness of the question. It was evident that the guest had touched upon something deeply significant. Yet he tried to evade the subject, offering vague answers.

"I have always loved eating," he replied. "Baruch Hashem, my dear wife prepares wonderful delicacies for us! You yourself witnessed throughout Shabbos how delicious our food is. I hope you enjoyed it!"

Thus he attempted to steer the conversation elsewhere. But no matter how often the disciple returned to the matter of the extraordinary quantities of food, the man evaded giving a satisfactory answer.

Finally, the disciple realized he had no choice but to reveal the truth. "You should know, Reb Chaim," he said, "that I did not arrive here by accident, nor did I randomly request to stay in your home. I am a disciple of my master, the holy Baal Shem Tov, and he specifically sent me to you, to stay in your home and eat with you. Therefore, I beg you — reveal to me why you eat so much."

When Reb Chaim heard the name of the holy Baal Shem Tov, and that this guest was his disciple, his entire demeanor changed. He apologized if perhaps he had not honored him appropriately according to his stature and said that under such circumstances he was obligated to reveal the secret behind his eating.

"My beloved father," he began, "was

a frail man — thin and weak, scarcely more than 'a little sack of bones.' One time the wicked Cossacks came storming into the Jewish quarter and proclaimed loudly that anyone who refused to convert and join them would be put to death. They burst into my father's home in fury and screamed at him: 'Decide immediately — will you apostatize, or shall we kill you here and now?!'

"My righteous father firmly refused. With complete conviction he answered: 'I will never abandon my faith, no matter what happens!'

"Immediately those terrifying gentiles seized him, shoved him violently, hurled him to the ground — and he instantly expired. Since he was so thin and weak, he died immediately. Hashem should avenge his blood. Their work was easy."

"But I learned from my father's experience. 'All my life I have prepared myself for that great day. When the gentiles come here, they will have to work very hard! I will not die so quickly between their fingers.

"The kiddush Hashem in my death will be enormous! I am preparing for them a great and powerful body. When they seek to kill me, I will truly feel the terrible suffering as they cut my flesh piece by piece. What a tremendous kiddush Hashem that will be — to merit dying for the honor of His blessed Name!"

Thus the man revealed the hidden secret of his life to the astonished disciple. When the disciple returned to his master and recounted what he had witnessed in the two places — utterly opposite approaches, from one extreme to the other — the Baal Shem Tov explained: "This is precisely what I wished to teach you. One cannot establish exact rules regarding the avodah of eating, for each person must understand where his own desire truly lies and tailor his avodah according to his individual soul. From these two forms of avodah we learn that whether one eats much or little, the essential thing is that his heart be directed toward Heaven. For in matters entrusted to the heart, it states, וְיִרְאֶתָּהּ מְאֹדָּה - And you shall fear your God. A person must carefully examine himself to understand, in every matter, what exactly is the 'will of Hashem' demanded of him.

"As we saw here: two opposite paths — one fulfilling the will of Hashem through fasting and self-denial, while the other fulfills the will of Hashem through abundant eating."

May you be inscribed and sealed immediately for a good life and for peace, Amen v'Amen.