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פרדס

A WELLSPRING OF CHIZUK

Shiurim of Rabbi Yissocher Yehuda Berko שליט"א
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יום כיפור

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יום כיפור - תשפ"ז

It's a Privilege to Look at Who We Are in this Generation

WE STAND BRAVE AND FULL OF COURAGE

APPROACHING THE HOLY DAY OF YOM KIPPUR

Before *Shemoneh Esrei*, we proclaim the *pasuk*, *ה' יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם, וְיִטְהַר אֶתְכֶם, וְיִסְלַח מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם* — *for on this day He will provide atonement for you - meaning the Ribbono Shel Olam will grant us forgiveness, לְטַהַר אֶתְכֶם, וְיִסְלַח מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם* — *to cleanse you from all your aveiros. לְפָנָיו ה' תִּטְהַר* — *before Hashem, you shall be clean; as we stand before Hashem, we emerge completely pure.*

When we recite these *pesukim*, our hearts race as overwhelming thoughts and emotions wash over us: *Who am I to stand in the presence of the Ribbono Shel Olam?*

The *Ari Hakadosh* explains, based on the *Zohar*, that we are entering a day defined as *Olam Haba*. This makes us wonder even more, "Who am I to step into such a day, into the realm of *Olam*

Haba?" We can feel discouraged and hesitant to begin *davening*.

The following story offers us the strength and encouragement needed to enter this holy day.

THE CHOFETZ CHAIM, THE KOHEN GADOL, AND THE LESHEM

The *Chofetz Chaim* was a *tzaddik* and *Gadol Hador*, whose greatness is truly beyond our comprehension. So much so, Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz quotes his Rebbe, Rav Chaim Brisker, that if the *Beis Hamikdash* were to be rebuilt in this generation, the *Chofetz Chaim* would serve as the *Kohen Gadol*.

The *Chofetz Chaim* used to urge people to go visit and gaze upon the countenance of the holy *tzaddik*, Rav Shlomo Elyashiv (the grandfather of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, renowned for his *sefer*, *Leshem Shevo V'Achlama*.)

He encouraged everyone to travel by wagon to visit him while he was still in this world, noting that in the World to Come, we might not be worthy of seeing him. The *Leshem's* stature was truly lofty.

The *Alter of Novardok*, a primary *talmid* of Rav Yisrael Salanter, was an incredibly powerful *tzaddik*. He established dozens of *yeshivos* in defiance of the Russian Empire, completely unafraid of their authority.

When soldiers stormed his *Beis Midrash* on *Motzei Shabbos* in the middle of *havdalah*, his *talmid*, the Steipler, attested that he was in such a heavenly state that he heard nothing. He did not hear the gunfire or the soldiers breaking in; not a single drop of wine fell from his cup.

One night, when he was learning *Toras HaNistar* with the *Leshem*, he sought rest in the middle of the night. He went to the outer room of the *Leshem's* house, which was the sole entrance to the *Leshem's* room. Suddenly, he heard voices and witnessed an incredible light. It seemed as though *neshamos* from the upper world had come to learn with the holy *Leshem*. Overwhelmed from fear, he fell from his bed.

From this story, we can begin to appreciate why the *Chofetz Chaim* urged people to behold the *Leshem's* face in this world – for few would merit standing in his presence in the next.

Yet, there was another group of people whom the *Chofetz Chaim* urged others to look upon, explaining that we might not be worthy of seeing them when *Moshiach* comes. Who were these remarkable individuals?

SACRIFICING WEALTH IN THE MODERN WORLD TO BE ABLE TO LEARN TORAH

In the early 1900's, Lithuania was a hub for the greatest *yeshivos*: Mir, Ponevezh, Lomza, Brisk, Radin, and Baranovitch. So much so, that in America, the land of gold, many young men sacrificed everything to travel to the Lithuanian *yeshivos* in Europe to learn Torah.

Some of these individuals became the greatest *Gedolim* of the generation. Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg was raised in America and went to learn in Lithuania. He became a preeminent *Gadol*; the author of *Taba'as Hachoshen*, *Mishmeres Hachaim*, and others - *sefarim* which are a necessity in every Yeshiva. Rav Avigdor Miller, whose teachings and *sefarim* have reached every corner of the globe, was also American-born and studied in Lithuania. Rav Gifter, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe *yeshiva*; and many other leaders were born in America and sacrificed much to go learn in Lithuania.

Among them was the Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva in America, Rav Shmuel Birnbaum, a *gaon* in all of Torah, whom many of us were privileged to see. He also traveled with other young men from the materialistic land of America to the simple *yeshivos* of Lithuania.

While there, he and a group of Americans went in to the *Chofetz Chaim* for a *bracha*. Though he was elderly, when he heard that *talmidim* had come from America with such sacrifice to

learn in Mir, he pleaded with his family, "Let them in; I only wish to look at their faces." He stated clearly, "I want to see them because I have the merit to do so in this world. But in *Olam Haba* when *Moshiach* arrives, I do not know if I will be worthy to look upon the faces of those who showed such self-sacrifice."

This is the second instance where the *Chofetz Chaim* noted the privilege of seeing certain faces now, as we may not have that merit in the future world or when *Moshiach* comes.

FINDING COURAGE IN OUR OWN GENERATION

Since the passing of the *Chofetz Chaim*, the world has changed many times over. The self-sacrifice our ancestors displayed is beyond our capabilities. Yet, the dedication a *Yiddishe* child displays today - growing up in a Western culture surrounded by modern technology - is immense! Everyone puts in the effort and sacrifices in a different way, whether in their relationship with Hashem or in their conduct toward their fellow man.

How would the *Chofetz Chaim* react? He would suggest that in such a generation, it is a merit just to look at our faces.

As we enter the *Beis Midrash* on this holy day, we turn to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and declare that despite the modern world around us, countless trials, and the many struggles we may endure, we still arrive for Yom Kippur. Dressed in white and wrapped in our *talleisim*, we joyfully recite the *bracha Shehechiyanu*, eager to do *teshuvah* and improve, making firm resolutions for the coming year. It is truly a merit to look upon our faces.

This realization grants us great courage as we step into this extraordinary day, which the *Ari Hakadosh* refers to as the realm of *Olam Haba* - a day when we stand before Hashem to be purified.

On one hand, we might wonder about our worth, knowing exactly what we have done this past year. Yet, on the other hand, we must consider the challenges of our generation and how much we have grown and achieved. It's a merit to look at our faces.

With that encouragement, we enter this incredible, holy day of Yom Kippur. We will stand courageously before the *Ribbono Shel Olam* to be cleansed, trusting that He will seal us in the *Sefer Hachaim* for a good, *gebentchte* year.





TESHUVAH

Small Resolutions

PART ONE

THE POWER OF SMALL RESOLUTIONS

Reb Yisroel Salanter, (in *Ohr Yisroel, Iggeres Zayin*) cites the *Gemara* in *Masechta Taanis*, which states: לא היה ימים טובים לישראל כיום הכיפורים - *there were no yomim tovim for Klal Yisroel like Yom Kippur; there is no Yom Tov as auspicious as Yom Kippur.*

Reb Yisroel Salanter shares that Yom Kippur is an extraordinary day for business, and we should strive to secure the best possible deal on it. On Yom Kippur, our outstanding debts are unconditionally wiped clean.

The primary business of Yom Kippur is *teshuvah*. The magnificent outcomes of successful *teshuvah* affect us both spiritually and physically. The more sincere and deep our self-purification, the greater our merit to be inscribed in the *Sefer Hachaim* for a wonderful life. What specific business deal should we undertake?

Reb Yisroel Salanter answers that the

most effective and successful deal one can make on Yom Kippur is a small resolution. He emphasizes that the value of a small commitment made on this day is beyond measure and incomparable to anything in the physical world. No sum of money, vacation, or personal dream can compete with the impact of taking on a small resolution.

REB YISRAEL SALANTER'S MUSSAR MOVEMENT

While Reb Yisrael Salanter famously established the *mussar* movement, he originally intended to be a *tzaddik nistar* - hidden *tzaddik*. In his younger years, he would wander in exile from town to town, following the tradition of the *Shaagas Aryeh*, the *Vilna Gaon*, and the two brothers, Reb Elimelech and Reb Zusha.

These *tzaddikim* followed a practice that the *Sefarim Hakdoshim* describe as an immensely spiritual path. Living as a hidden *tzaddik* allowed them to reach

exalted levels because it eliminated pride. Furthermore, wandering in exile serves as a profound purification for the *neshama*.

However, Reb Yisrael Salanter faced a dilemma. He was afraid of wasting time while traveling and not learning Torah, yet he couldn't carry a *Gemara* while in exile without revealing his identity as a true *talmid chacham*. As a solution, he began studying and reviewing the entire *Shas* along with the four sections of *Shulchan Aruch* by heart. By memorizing these texts, he ensured that he wouldn't waste a single moment while in exile, enabling him to learn twenty-four hours a day without needing a physical *sefer*.

He began reviewing *Shas*, eventually mastering half of it along with every single *Tosafos*. He memorized it all perfectly, but then he stopped. He decided he would neither go into *galus* nor become a hidden *tzaddik*. Why? Because he came across the teachings where *Chazal* describe the incredible merit of inspiring the public, and he realized the immense value of bringing a fellow *Yid* back to *teshuvah*.

The *Zohar* states that if we truly understood the significance of inspiring others, we would run through the streets to reach out to *Yiddishe* children. The *Alter of Novardok* used to tell his *talmidim* that the reward for influencing others is so vast that he feared if he described it, they would lose their fear of *Gehennom*.

Thus, Reb Yisrael Salanter decided he wouldn't keep his *tzidkos* to himself; he went out into the world and founded the *mussar* movement. He began with approaching the wealthiest individuals.

He spoke with the *Alter of Novardok* who was a very successful and wealthy businessman. Through that single conversation, he completely transformed his life.

Reb Yisrael Salanter traveled around delivering lectures and visiting the wealthy to secure funding for the *mussar* movement. When visiting a rich person, it was never just about obtaining a donation; he would engage them in conversation to try and shift their entire worldview.

THE LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT OF TEN MINUTES OF MUSSAR

On one occasion, he visited a very wealthy man and encouraged him to start learning. After an hour of Reb Yisrael's persuasion, the man agreed, saying, "Okay, Rabbi, I will give you ten minutes a day, but that's all."

He then asked, "What should I learn during these ten minutes? *Gemara*, *Shulchan Aruch*, or *Rambam*?" He expected to be told to study something complex and demanding. Instead, Reb Yisrael Salanter said, "I want you to spend those ten minutes studying *mussar* and *Aggadeta*."

This seemed quite easy, and the wealthy man was relieved. He said, "Excellent! I won't have to struggle with difficult topics or complex commentaries. No problem, Rabbi," and he accepted the commitment.

A year later, Reb Yisrael Salanter returned to find the man completely transformed. He was an entirely different person, as if he had been reborn. Reb Yisrael asked, "What

happened to you?" The man replied that he was now learning for many hours a day and serving Hashem in an incredible way.

Reb Yisrael asked, "I don't understand; I only asked for ten minutes." The man answered, "Yes, Rabbi. But in those ten daily minutes of mussar, I discovered that I actually have plenty of time to learn, and those few minutes truly changed my life."

Therefore, on Yom Kippur – when our commitments have a profound effect and is the ultimate business deal – let's resolve to learn mussar every day. Whether it's ten minutes, five minutes, or even just two minutes, it should be a fixed and consistent practice. Such small commitments can literally transform our lives and bring out the best in us.

RABBI YOSEF SHMUEL OF KRAKOW AND THE SHLAH HAKADOSH

There's an incredible story recorded in the *sefer Be'er Yitzchak* regarding the author of *Mesoros HaShas*, Rabbi Yosef Shmuel of Krakow. (Every page of *Gemara* features the *Mesoros HaShas* cross-references in the margin.) He accomplished something truly remarkable: in an era without computers or digital technology, he documented every location in *Shas* and *Midrash* where a specific passage appeared. Clearly, he was a tremendous *talmid chacham* and a *gaon* in Torah.

The *Chida* notes in his *sefer Shem HaGedolim* that Rabbi Yosef Shmuel studied the entire *Shas* in depth forty-two times. For twenty-five years, he learned eighteen hours a day while

standing rather than sitting. He possessed such power that whatever he *davened* for, received a heavenly response; his *tefillos* were answered like those of the *Rishonim* – such as *Rashi*, *Rabbeinu Tam*, the *Rambam*, the *Ramban*, and the *Rashba*!

Rabbi Yosef Shmuel had a specific custom for managing his *yeshiva*: they studied a topic all day, and he delivered a lecture on it that night. Imagine the atmosphere, as the greatest scholars would engage in intense Torah debates. It was a magnificent scene.

When Rabbi Yosef Shmuel passed away, his *talmidim* gathered to continue their studies. That evening, they intended to learn together, albeit without their beloved *rebbe*. Suddenly, their *rebbe*, Rabbi Yosef Shmuel, the author of *Mesoros Hashas*, appeared sitting in his chair.

They were struck with terror and fear. They were deeply confused, having just attended his funeral and wept bitterly over his loss, yet there he was again. Mystified, they wondered what was happening.

Rabbi Yosef Shmuel told them, "Please don't be afraid; I will explain what is happening." He recounted that upon his arrival in Heaven, a cry went out to make way for Rabbi Yosef Shmuel of Krakow. He was then brought to his designated place in *Gan Eden*, right next to the *Shlah Hakadosh*.

However, the *Shlah Hakadosh* turned to him and unexpectedly said, "You cannot sit beside me." When Rabbi Yosef Shmuel asked why, the *Shlah* replied, "Though you studied *Shas* all your life, you never learned my *sefer*, *Shlah*

Hakadosh, which is filled with *mussar*.” The *Shlah* explained that he wrote his *sefer* with tears and at incredibly lofty levels. Since Rabbi Yosef Shmuel never learned from his *sefer*, he was prohibited from resting next to the *Shlah*.

The matter was brought before the *Beis Din shel Ma’aleh* for a trial. The verdict was issued: the seat next to the *Shlah Hakadosh* belongs to Reb Yosef Shmuel and cannot be taken away, but he must perform an act to rectify the fact that he didn’t study *mussar* in his lifetime.

Reb Yosef Shmuel proposed a solution. He would return to the place where he spread Torah - in his *yeshiva* - to ensure they would begin studying *mussar* from that day forward. If he accomplished

this, he could return to his place beside the *Shlah Hakadosh*.

Reb Yosef Shmuel explained to his *talmidim*, "That is why I am here today. I implore you, my dear *talmidim*, to take it upon yourselves to study a *sefer* of *mussar*, specifically the *Shlah Hakadosh*, every day before your evening studies. By doing so, I can return to *Gan Eden* and remain in my place of rest in peace."

Immediately after his *talmidim* accepted this commitment, he vanished and returned to his resting place in *Gan Eden*.

May Hashem help us all to accept the study of *mussar* every day with consistency — a practice that will truly transform our lives.

TESHUVAH

Small Resolutions

PART TWO

TESHUVAH - PRIMARILY MAKING RESOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A major obstacle arises when a person contemplates doing *teshuvah* and turning over a new leaf. He doubts himself and asks: "What about my past *aveiros*?" He realizes he must repent, but the mere mention of *teshuvah* brings a sense of darkness. He is an easy target for the *yetzer hara*, given his uneasiness with the concept of *teshuvah*, primarily because he has never truly learned what *teshuvah* entails.

Dwelling on the past or meticulously

reviewing every mistake is not the core of *teshuvah*. That is not true repentance; rather, it is mentally and emotionally re-enacting the *aveira*, which is a transgression in itself. As explained in the *Sefer Hachshoros Ha'Avreichim*, those who constantly brood over their past mistakes are not rectifying them, instead they are sinking deeper into the problem.

This is not *charata* - regretting the past does not mean constantly rewinding those moments in your mind. Returning to the past should not involve chastising oneself or self-deprecation. *Charata* means your actions of the past

truly bother you that you acted against the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, prompting you to make the right changes.

Rabbeinu Yonah in *Shaarei Teshuvah* teaches that *teshuvah* consists of three steps. The first is *charata* – regretting and feeling the pain caused to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. But that is only one aspect of doing *teshuvah*.

The second and most primary component is *kabbalah* – a resolution to stop – cease committing *aveiros* and make a firm commitment for the future.

Only then does the *Rabbeinu Yonah* suggest focusing on repentance, considering the pain caused to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, and finally, *Viduy*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (in *hilchos Yom Kippur*) and the *Magen Avraham* rule that one does not need to explicitly name the *aveira* committed; one only needs to say *חטאתי, עביתי, פשעתי*. The established *Viduy* for the *Klal* is what we recite on Yom Kippur: "*Al Chet*".

In reality, saying those three words suffices. *חטאתי* refers to unintentional *aveiros*, *עביתי* to intentional ones, and *פשעתי* to acts of rebellion – doing something wrong specifically to anger Hashem. Once those three are recited, the mitzvah of *Viduy* is fulfilled.

THE POWER OF RESISTING FOR JUST FIVE MINUTES

Reb Shlomke Zvhiler was a tremendous *tzaddik* who possessed *ruach hakodesh*. There was hardly a family in Yerushalayim who didn't have some connection to him. There is a prominent family in Yerushalayim today with thousands of descendants who are

talmidei chachamim. Unbelievably, the patriarch of this family was once a major *baal aveira*, deeply involved in forbidden behaviors. Despite many efforts to bring him back to *teshuvah*, nothing seemed to work.

When Reb Shlomke heard about this man, he requested for him to be summoned. The man told the messenger, "Tell the Rebbe I will come out of respect, but if he wants to talk about *teshuvah*, forget it. It won't work." Reb Shlomke replied, "I won't talk about *teshuvah*."

Upon arrival, the man said, "Rebbe, what do you want? I only have a few minutes." Reb Shlomke requested that the next time he faced a temptation, he should postpone for just five minutes. Incredulous, the man asked, "That's all?" The Rebbe confirmed, "Yes, I don't need more. I'm not asking you to change your life around, just delay the prohibition for five minutes." The man gladly agreed, relieved at having not been forced into *teshuvah*.

A few months passed, and the man returned to Reb Shlomke; completely transformed, looking like an *ehrliche Yid*. He described that he had accurately followed the rebbe's instructions. He asked what the secret was behind those five minutes.

There are two versions of Reb Shlomke's explanation.

One explanation was that when one delays a temptation, even for just five minutes, it stirs the Heavens, bringing immeasurable joy to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.

The second explanation was that by postponing the *aveira* for five minutes,

the person breaks the iron gates and walls surrounding his heart. Once that barrier is breached, he is freed from his internal prison. Once he's out of that darkness, he receives *siyata dishmaya* and returning to the right path becomes much easier.

The man related how the first time he delayed the initial temptation for just five minutes he felt wonderful! "I am capable!" He told himself that if he can manage five minutes, why not try for another five?

That process continued repeatedly until he reached the point where he stood across Reb Shlomke, dressed as an *ehrlche Yid*.

The most inspiring point derived from this story is the first principle in doing *teshuvah*: Do not dwell on your history; focus on what lies ahead. Committing to a resolution - even a minor one of just five minutes - transforms your entire life.

THE PEAK OF SATISFACTION: CONQUERING TEMPTATION

The *Alter of Kelm* describes a profound concept regarding the struggle with the *yetzer hara*. He poses the following question: What's the ultimate peak of satisfaction in this world? Some might mention fine food, others might discuss clothing, maybe luxury cars, or owning multiple businesses.

The *Alter of Kelm* explains that *kavod*, honor, is the ultimate form of gratification for a person in this world. He notes that the most significant and

authentic honor a person can experience is the feeling of conquering a temptation from the *yetzer hara*. The exultation is the most exceptional feeling. That pleasure, the satisfaction derived from such self-control, is unmatched by anything else.

The *Alter of Kelm* suggests that this is the key to winning the battle against the *yetzer hara*. Keep reminding yourself that the struggle is about preserving your dignity and honor. When winning the battle, you'll experience the peak of satisfaction in this world.

Consider Pharaoh, who possessed nearly everything he desired. Yet, he reached the lowest spiritual depths a human could reach, asking Moshe Rabbeinu, מִי ה' אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁמֵּעַ בְּקוֹלִי, *who is Hashem that I must obey Him?* He was preoccupied with his own status. Who is Hashem compared to him?

After experiencing all the physical pleasures available in this world, the ultimate goal, the peak he strived for was still personal honor and prestige.

What we can learn from this, as the *Alter of Kelm* taught, is to view the spiritual struggle as a matter of your own dignity and honor. You will suddenly find yourself winning one battle after another.

Returning to the story of Reb Shlomke Zvhiller; the man explained that when he successfully delayed the impulse for five minutes, he felt a surge of pride. For years, he had succumbed to every temptation, but finally, he had achieved something; he felt worthy. He had defeated the *yetzer hara* for five whole minutes. The incredible sense of honor he experienced couldn't be compared to

anything else; it was the peak of satisfaction he had ever reached, despite constantly giving in to all his temptations.

The greatest honor for a king is to rage a war against another powerful, mighty ruler and emerge victorious. Achieving such is the height of royal prestige. Same to us, איזהו גיבור הכובש את יצרו - *Who is a hero? He who subdues his yetzer hara*. Fighting the yetzer hara is the pinnacle of honor because there's no enemy as formidable in the entire world.

As the *Chovos HaLevavos* mentions, when a king returned from a military campaign, a wise man told him, "You have returned from a small battle; now begins the great battle. You returned from a minor victory; now you face the challenge of the major victory." The king asked what he meant, and the wise man replied, "The battle takes place within your own private space - the battle against the yetzer hara."

SMALL RESOLUTIONS BRING A PURE FUTURE

We face the yetzer hara every single day. Delaying a temptation for five minutes, is defeating the world's greatest enemy, the yetzer hara. Doing so will make us feel so empowered that it will give us the strength to continue.

Such is the power of one, small resolution. So, commit right now to avoiding lashon hara for just two minutes a day. Do this for a week at a time and take pride in your success as you overcome the yetzer hara. You will gradually find yourself doing it for four minutes, fifteen minutes, or half an hour, until you'll be entirely pure from lashon hara.

Begin by ignoring the past and looking toward the future. The second step is to maintain a small, consistent resolution, which will make you feel good about yourself. With Hashem's help, you will succeed, and you'll merit all forms of good, both spiritually and physically.

TESHUVAH

Small Resolutions

PART THREE

COMMITMENT FOR THE FUTURE IS THE CORE OF TESHUVA

Rabbeinu Yonah, when listing the steps of *teshuvah*, emphasizes that the primary focus is committing to do better in the future.

There's a well-known story in the

Gemara that clearly illustrates this principle of *Rabbeinu Yonah*. There was once a notorious *baal aveira* who had committed almost every possible transgression. He approached a woman and expressed his desire to marry her. She replied, "I cannot marry you because you are such a wicked person. If you choose to repent and become righteous, I will marry you." He agreed, gave her a ring, and stated he wished to

betroth her on the condition that he would become a *Baal Teshuvah*.

The *Gemara* concludes that the betrothal was *halachically* valid.

How is this possible? He was a wicked man who did everything wrong. How could he change in a single moment? The *Gemara* explains that in the very second he handed her the ring, the thought of repenting and doing *teshuvah* crossed his mind.

Understandably, it would be nearly impossible to rectify his entire past and feel deep heartbreak and remorse, in that split second. However, what one can do in an instant, is decide to stop and resolve to be good from that moment on. The *Gemara* acknowledges that this was sufficient to make the marriage valid.

There are two foundations to consider when making resolutions for the future. First, do not dwell on the past, as it leads to unnecessary complications. Save that for the final stage and ensure you have guidance from a *talmid chacham* who understands your nature. Second, when one commits to a future resolution, even a small one, the results are incredible. This is where people often lack self-belief; they don't trust the power of a minor commitment. This skepticism keeps them back from doing a proper *teshuvah*.

DWELLING ON THE PAST HINDERS FUTURE SUCCESS

There was a young man who once visited the *Lev Simcha of Gur* to pour out his heart. He explained that while he had a troubled past, he truly wanted

to do *teshuvah*. However, he did not know how to reach past the barriers that were built around his heart to pull himself together for a fresh start. He remained broken, constantly dwelling on his past mistakes.

The *Lev Simcha* told him: "Stop ruminating on the past. Simply start where you are, look toward the future. Commit to one small thing, and that will be enough." He then shared a story from *Talmud Yerushalmi* at the end of *Masechte Peah*.

The *Yerushalmi* asks a profound question: When a poor person asks for *tzedakah*, the halachah requires you to give. Must you give immediately, or can you wait a few minutes? Ideally, you should contribute on the spot. But the *Yerushalmi* suggests that even if you didn't, there's a way to view your actions favorably to bring you peace of mind.

Why is this the case? Because a needy individual isn't always genuinely destitute. You therefore shouldn't be overly distressed if you failed to give *tzedakah* at the exact moment of being asked. The *Yerushalmi* recounts a narrative that serves as a justification for those who didn't give *tzedakah* immediately.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF REISH LAKISH

Reb Yochanan and *Reish Lakish* lived in the city of *Teverya* where *Reb Yochanan* wrote the *Gemara Yerushalmi*. He passed away in *Teverya* and is buried near *Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai*, the *Shelah*, and the *Rambam*. His brother-in-law was the renowned *Reish Lakish*.

The story famously goes that *Reb Yochanan* observed *Reish Lakish* leaping across the entire width of a river in a single bound. He remarked that such immense strength should be dedicated to the study of Torah.

Reish Lakish responded by declaring his position as the leader of a major gang of outlaws, questioning if *teshuvah* was possible for him. *Reb Yochanan* encouraged him to repent, promising his sister's hand in marriage if he did. *Reish Lakish* accepted the challenge and underwent a complete transformation.

These two *Tanaim* became the ultimate symbols of *teshuvah*. *Reb Yochanan* was the catalyst for his brother-in-law's return, while *Reish Lakish* served as a living example of what *teshuvah* can achieve. He had been the leader of a notorious group of violent thieves - who according to the *Yerushalmi* and *Midrash* were among the most dangerous criminals, even committing murder - yet he repented and became the famous *Reish Lakish* commented in the *Gemara*.

One day these two *Tanaim* were heading to the hot springs for medicinal purposes. Before they entered the bathhouse, a poor man approached them, begging for money and bread, claiming he was on the verge of collapsing. They asked him to wait about an hour while they finished their bath, promising to provide him with enough money for a substantial meal afterward.

However, when they exited, they found the man dead on the ground. *Reb Yochanan* and *Reish Lakish* both lamented that since they lacked the

merit to assist him while he was alive, they should at least merit to care for him after his death. They decided to perform the *taharah*, hold a funeral, and ensure he received a proper Jewish burial.

As these holy *Tanaim* began the *tahara* and removed his outer clothing, they discovered a bag of gold coins, a massive fortune, hidden in the pocket. Clearly, this "poor man" was actually a wealthy fraud. The *Yerushalmi* records that *Reb Avihu*, citing *Reb Elazar*, suggested we should be grateful for such scammers. Their existence provides a defense for those who fail to give *tzedakah* instantly, as one can argue the solicitor might've been a fraud. While we shouldn't intentionally delay our donation, this story offers a point of merit.

FINDING HIDDEN TREASURES THROUGH SMALL DEEDS

The *Lev Simcha* questions why the *Yerushalmi* includes every specific detail of this narrative. Why record the rabbis' specific dialogue about gaining merit through his burial? Since every word of the *Gemara* is sacred and intentional, there must be a reason for including this specific detail.

Consider the emotional state of *Reb Yochanan* and *Reish Lakish* upon finding the dead body; they were devastated. The natural human reaction would be to spiral into lifelong guilt and anguish, believing they had caused a man's death.

Instead, they chose not to dwell on the past or be consumed by their mistake.

They decided to make a positive resolution for the future. Though it was a relatively small gesture, they committed to providing him with a respectful burial.

Providing a funeral hardly balances the scale to being responsible for a death; it seems like a minor deed. Yet, these *Tanaim* - who were masters of *teshuvah* - demonstrated that one must look forward rather than backward. Even a small positive action, a step toward the future, is the correct response to a past failure.

The *Lev Simcha* concludes that because they maintained a positive outlook and valued their small resolution, they were privileged to discover the hidden treasure. Had they not committed to that small act of kindness, the coins would never have been revealed to them.

Had the *chevra kedushah* simply taken the body, the treasure might have remained hidden or been taken by someone else. Ultimately, *Reb Yochanan* and *Reish Lakish* would've spent their lives broken by guilt. Because they chose to look ahead and commit to a small deed of kindness, the truth was revealed, saving them from a lifetime of unnecessary pain and anguish.

The *Lev Simcha* told this young man that this serves as a lesson: firstly, do not dwell on what has passed, but focus on what lies ahead. Secondly, as you move toward the future, value even the smallest positive action.

He concluded by sharing an incredible insight from his grandfather, the *Chiddushei HaRim*. When Lot and his family were fleeing from Sodom, the *malachim* commanded him, "Do not look back!"

What was the message they were trying to convey? The *Chiddushei HaRim* shared the following profound principle. He explained that while Lot lived in Sodom, and was at his lowest point, immersed in the world's most severe transgressions, he was now in the process of escaping; of running toward the future.

A person who has been surrounded by the *yetzer hara* and multiple *aveiros* - but is currently breaking free and repenting - what is the proper approach for such an individual?

The *malachim* told Lot, אל תבט אחרֶיךָ - meaning do not look behind you. They were instructing him not to revisit his old memories for even a single moment. Do not spend time reflecting on your past misdeeds. Focus solely on the future, run and save yourself!

Direct your gaze toward the mountain ahead. You might ask, what is on that hill? Only the small town of Tzoar, what impact will that have on my life? But this is how one begins a new turn in life. Head toward Tzoar which is a step away from the past - even if it's a small destination - and that's how you will be rescued.

His wife, though, did look back, and as the *posuk* describes, she was transformed into a pillar of salt.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* explains that if a person looks backward instead of forward, and fails to commit to even a small resolution, they will become like a pillar of salt - filled with bitterness.

ESCAPING FROM SODOM:
DO NOT LOOK BACK



Yom Kippur: A Day that Each One of Us Have the Power to Bring Moshiach

THE JOY OF ERASING OUR DEBTS

We recognize this incredible day of Yom Kippur as a time when the *Ribbono Shel Olam* forgives all *aveiros*, as the *posuk* states: **כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם** – for on this day He will provide an atonement for you. On this day, Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu, **סִלַּחְתִּי כְדַבְרֶיךָ** - I have forgiven according to your word, erasing the *aveiros* the *Yidden* did in the *midbar*. Not only were they forgiven then, but for all future generations, this day was declared to serve as a time of atonement.

Consider how a person would feel receiving a letter from the bank stating that their mortgage, credit card debts, and all loans are completely paid off. The person would be overjoyed, jumping and dancing in pure delight.

On this day of Yom Kippur, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* forgives all our *aveiros*; all our misdeeds are nullified, and harsh

decrees are torn up as we recite, **אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ קָרַע רַע גִּזְרֵינוּ** - *Our Father, our King, tear up the evil of our sentence.* After engaging in *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and fasting all day, Hashem responds, **סִלַּחְתִּי** כְדַבְרֶיךָ. There are no words to describe how ecstatic we can be from such a process, our minds cannot grasp the magnitude of this day.

Now we can understand why we recite *Shehecheyanu* as we enter this holy day. *Shehecheyanu* is not said on a cup of *kiddush* wine or at a festive meal. We are simply calling out to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, saying, "Thank You for keeping us alive, sustaining us, and bringing us to this moment." We are so grateful that Yom Kippur has arrived and that Hashem will forgive our *aveiros*.

The *Ramak*, *Rabbeinu Yonah*, and the *Shelah Hakadosh* explain that this is why we eat a festive meal Erev Yom Kippur; we're demonstrating our joy that our spiritual debts and wrongdoings are

being canceled and our decrees are being discarded. The *Ribbono Shel Olam* will seal us into the *Sefer Hachaim*.

SHABBOS FROM HASHEM; YOM TOV DEPENDS ON US

The *Yismach Moshe*, in *Parshas Emor*, reveals another profound secret regarding the power we possess during these days. The difference between Shabbos and Yom Tov is that Shabbos does not rely on us; it does not require *Beis Din* to sanctify the month. In ancient times, witnesses had to testify each month if they had seen the new moon, after which the *Beis Din* would declare the new month.

From that point, they would count the days to determine when Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos would come out to be. The same applied to the month of Nissan; once the month was sanctified, the count toward Pesach began. Meaning, all *Yomim Tovim* depended on the witnesses and the *Beis Din* sanctifying the new month.

On the other hand, the *Gemara* explains that Shabbos is fixed and established from Heaven. It is therefore called שבת ליה; it belongs to Hashem and does not depend on us. It is not affected by human ruling. Shabbos comes every seven days, as it says, ביום השביעי שבת - on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.

This is why we say מקדש השבת - who sanctifies the Shabbos. The phrasing is in the passive or hidden form. We do not specify who performs the sanctification since it's hinted that the *Ribbono Shel Olam* sanctifies Shabbos.

However, when it comes to Yom Tov, the wording is changed to, מקדש ישראל - who sanctifies *Klal Yisroel* and their times. We declare that us, *Yidden*, are the ones who sanctify the times of the *Yomim Tovim*.

How so? As previously mentioned, witnesses testify that they saw the new moon, and *Beis Din* declares the month sanctified. Through our actions, we determine the dates for the all the *Yomim Tovim*.

THE ERA OF MOSHIACH: A SHABBOS DEPENDENT ON US

The *Yismach Moshe* notes that there are two "Shabbos" periods in the universe that do depend on *Klal Yisroel*. The first is יום שכולו שבת - a day that is entirely Shabbos, referring to the times of *Moshiach*, which is termed Shabbos. We *daven* for this every Shabbos during *Birchas Hamazon*, הרחמן הוא ינחילנו ליום - שכולו שבת ומנוחה לחיי העולמים - may Hashem grant us an inheritance of the day that is entirely Shabbos and rest for eternal life. This day that is 'entirely Shabbos' depends on us; our actions and *tefillos* determine the arrival of this Shabbos.

The *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* relates a story where *Reb Yehoshua ben Levi* met *Moshiach* and asked him when he was coming. *Moshiach* replied, "Today."

The day ended, and *Moshiach* still didn't make his appearance. When *Reb Yehoshua ben Levi* questioned him, saying he was told the *geulah* would come today, *Moshiach* referenced the posuk: היום אם בקולו תשמעו - today, if you will listen to His voice. If you listen

to My commandments today, I will redeem you and bring *Moshiach*.

Moshiach told *Reb Yehoshua ben Levi* that he had indeed spoken the truth. Yes, every single day - "today" - *Moshiach* is on hand to come redeem *Klal Yisroel* if they do *teshuvah*. Every day the *Ribbono Shel Olam* says, היום אם בקולו תשמועו; I hope the *Yidden* will repent today so I can bring *Moshiach* today.

The *Yismach Moshe* explains that when *Moshiach* comes it will be forever. Those days will be entirely Shabbos, and these days depend on us. That it is the first Shabbos that relies on our actions.

YOM KIPPUR: שבת

השבתון

There is a second Shabbos that also depends on us, and that is Yom Kippur. When the witnesses testified about seeing the new moon, *Beis Din* sanctified the month of Tishrei; and from there, it was a count of ten days to reach Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is also referred to as Shabbos - the "Shabbos of Shabboses." While it is called Shabbos, this specific Shabbos depends on us because the month of Tishrei is only sanctified once two witnesses notice the new moon.

There is a famous dispute in *Masechte Rosh Hashanah* between *Rabban Gamliel* and *Reb Yehoshua* over the date of Yom Kippur. *Rabban Gamliel* instructed *Reb Yehoshua* to appear before him on the day *Reb Yehoshua* calculated to be Yom Kippur, carrying his money. In other words, the *Gemara* is demonstrating that the timing of Yom Kippur is dependent upon human decision; it's dependent on *Beis Din*.

The *Yismach Moshe* teaches that just as the incredible era of *Moshiach* - which will be an eternal Shabbos - depends on us, so too does our preparation of Yom Kippur for Shabbos. It is up to us to make this Yom Kippur the one that finally brings *Moshiach*.

Just as we possess the power to bring *Moshiach* - the eternal Shabbos, we also have the power to transform Yom Kippur into that Shabbos. The *Yismach Moshe* says that if we *daven* and fully utilize these twenty-six hours, we will merit bringing *Moshiach*.

DOING OUR PART AND PERSONAL MOSHIACH

Hearing such a secret and such powerful words uplifts our hearts and spirits as we approach the day. We enter Yom Kippur knowing the *Ribbono Shel Olam* will erase all our *aveiros* and we also hold the power on this very day to bring *Moshiach*.

Naturally, after hearing such a fundamental concept, many people might wonder: What if I do my part? What if I *davened* and utilized every single second to the max, but *Moshiach* still didn't come because other *Yidden* didn't maximize the day as they should have?

Another question a person might ask is, "I'm not on the high level the *Yismach Moshe* expects of me, to utilize every single moment to its fullest."

The *Me'or Einayim* explains in *Parshas Bereishis* that if a person fulfills their duties - completing their learning, their *davening*, and everything they are supposed to do - the *Ribbono Shel Olam* will send them their private *Moshiach*

to lead them out of their personal exile. He explains this means you will live without pain or worry; in his words, it is a "miniature *Olam Haba*," a taste of *Gan Eden*.

Therefore, when entering Yom Kippur, simply focus on doing your own work. If you fulfill your task and utilize every moment, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* will send your personal *Moshiach* to redeem you, placing you in an incredible state similar to the times of *Moshiach*.

Regarding the second question about not being capable of utilizing every moment, we must remember the words of the *Chovos HaLevavos*. He teaches a fundamental principle in serving Hashem: the *Ribbono Shel Olam* only asks that you do your part. He says that if you do what you can, while *davening* and striving to reach a higher level, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* will open the gates to the highest levels. He will open channels in your mind and heart that you never knew existed, allowing you to succeed. **גמר חתימה טובה!**

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