

Havineini

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Bitachon
Weekly

Chovos HaLevavos
Sha'ar HaBitachon #79 Part 2

The Ribbono Shel Olam Is the Source of All Compassion

Our Earthly Compassion Draws Down Heavenly Mercy

▼ Compassion for Others Is a Form of *Hishtadlus*

How can a person merit Heavenly compassion to be aroused toward him? It works precisely the same way as the *shefa* of money and *parnassah*. The Gemara (Niddah 70a) tells us the answer to *what can a person do in order to become wealthy? He must increase in business dealings... that is, hishtadlus*. This is the first thing one must do. But the second thing, says the Gemara, is *יבקש רחמים ממי שהעושר שלו*, *he must plead for mercy from the One to Whom wealth belongs*.

The same applies to when we wish to merit compassion from Above. We must daven that Hashem send us

compassion, but we must also perform *hishtadlus*. What is the *hishtadlus* to merit *rachmanus* from Above? Say Chazal (Shabbos 151b), *כל המרחם על הבריות, מרחמין עליו מן השמים*, *one who has compassion upon the creations merits compassion from heaven*.

Just as we believe in *hishtadlus* when it comes to *parnassah*, believing that Hashem will send *shefa*, so too must we believe in doing the necessary *hishtadlus* to incur heavenly mercy and compassion, and this is accomplished by having compassion for our fellow *Yidden*.

▼ Giving and Getting

For example—If a *Yid* feels a calling to help struggling teenagers who need *chizuk*, says the Ribbono shel Olam to him, “You devote yourself

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חודש אלול

Elul: Doing Our Best in Teshuvah Brings *Siyata DiShmaya*

Sage Advice

The Gemara (Taanis 8b) relates that once, in the times of Rabbi Zeira, the *goyim* decreed a terrible edict, but, knowing that *Yidden* have the power to fast and nullify the decree, they also declared that it was forbidden to fast. Said Rabbi Zeira, “Let us accept upon ourselves the *taanis*, and when the decree ends, we will fast then.”

This is incredibly insightful advice that is instructive as we embark on a journey of *teshuvah*. (Good advice can come from any wise person, but Torah advice can come only from a *tzaddik*). Rabbi Zeira was saying: It is *always*

to these precious *neshamos*. Don't look at whether you earn \$50 or \$75 an hour.... Do your mission with devotion. Of course, you're allowed to ask for payment... but don't look at this aspect so much. Remember your mission to make the world a better place, and I will take care of your needs."

The same applies if this person's talent is building homes where *Yiddishe* families will live or if it is producing other products that they will consume—he must execute his mission with sincerity, and the Ribbono shel Olam will provide his needs.

We see clearly that when a person devotes himself to giving to others—he's a giver, he does for others and he gives to others—he is automatically filled with meaning and satisfaction. This isn't a superficial feeling of satisfaction, but a deep-rooted *chiyus*. The reason for this is that such a person channels the Ribbono shel Olam, Who is the ultimate giver, and he is provided his needs from Above.

▼ Don't Close the Spigot

The same applies to the concept of *rachmanus*. The

Ribbono shel Olam says, "I need people in the world who will transmit My compassion to *Yidden* who need it. I want My *rachmanus* to reach them, and I want it to reach them through the conduit on *Olam HaZeh*; I want *people* to transmit My *rachmanus* to them. And **when you do your mission and have *rachmanus* on another *Yid*, I will automatically have *rachmanus* on you.** This is an automatic reaction, because this is how I have designed creation."

Sometimes, people feel that no one has compassion for them. They're sad and broken, and they complain to others in an effort to gain sympathy. But the truth is that no one can have compassion for another—because he has no compassion of his own to give; he can only serve as a conduit for the Ribbono shel Olam's mercy and compassion.

The problem is that we rely on other humans, and not on the Ribbono shel Olam—and this itself closes the spigot of heavenly mercy and compassion, causing blockages that prevent Hashem's *rachmanus* from reaching us. We're going in

possible to come close to Hashem; nothing can hold us back.

The *Sifri* on the *pasuk* of ואהבת says—and this is quoted by Rashi—שלא יהא לבך חלוק על המקום, *your heart should not be divided against the Omnipresent*. But, Rav Shlomo of Karlin explained, **your heart shouldn't be divided [based] on the *makom/place*.** That is, you can serve Hashem wherever you are, and there's no excuse to say that a certain place isn't conducive to serving Hashem. There's always an *avodah* to do, wherever you are.

And so, taught Rabbi Zeira, if the *goyim* decreed that we are not permitted to fast, that doesn't mean that we can't come close to Hashem in other ways. In fact, we can annul the *gezeirah* by our sheer closeness to Hashem—for they cannot rob us of the feeling of closeness in our heart. If we're forced not to fast—but we nevertheless accept the *taanis* upon ourselves—then Hashem will surely consider it as though we have fasted, and thereby He will remove the *gezeirah*.

The Day You Gave Your Heart

Rabbi Zeira explained to the people that he took this idea from a *pasuk* in *Sefer Daniel* (10:12) which says, כי מן היום הראשון אשר נתת את לבך, *for from the very first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself*

the opposite direction, and we distance ourselves from Hashem, making it difficult for His compassion to reach us.

▼ Feeding the Birds

Indeed, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*siman* 605:1) says that the *minhag* is to cast the innards of the *kapparos* onto the rooftops, where they will be accessible to birds. The Taz explains that this is an act of mercy on our part, which in turn arouses heavenly mercy upon us—because one who has compassion for the creations earns Divine compassion.

Rav Chaim Palagi notes in *Sefer Ruach Chaim* that when there's an ailing person in the home, *R"l*, we likewise throw food onto the rooftops for the birds, for this will awaken Hashem's compassion upon us. When we exhibit mercy and compassion for others, the automatic reaction is a *shefa* of Divine compassion.

How to Become a Chariot for the Shechinah Through Compassion

▼ Giving Instead of Getting

We must make it a way of life to become givers rather than takers. Sometimes, a person is in need of *zechuyos*, and what he does in this instance is to take more from others. This is a shame, because this person must really invoke *rachamei Shamayim*. To do so, he must do his *hishtadlus* by being merciful to others. This is a time for *giving*, not for taking.... The real mission in such a case is to find a way to give to others, thus invoking Divine compassion from above.

There's a well-known photograph of the great *ba'al mussar* Rav Elya Lopian feeding milk to a cat. This was an act of mercy and compassion—but it must emanate from a heart that naturally wants to give mercy... (not from a *segulah* organization that will feed milk to cats on your behalf for a fee...).

A *Yid* comes to This World to become *davuk* to Hashem. And how do we fulfill the obligation of *ולדבקה בו*? By channeling and emulating the nature of Hashem, as it were. Just as He is merciful, so must we be merciful. The Divine plan is for us to tether ourselves to Him

before your G-d, your words were heard.

The *yesod* is that **when a person resolves to serve Hashem, and he submits himself to the Ribbono shel Olam—even if he's unable, for whatever reason, to carry out his resolution—he nevertheless becomes close to Hashem through his firm resolution alone.** And once a *Yid* is close, his *tefillos* are accepted and the *gezeiros* are annulled. This is what this Gemara is teaching us, and many of the *tzaddikim* would cite this foundational teaching.

Sometimes, we're hesitant to take certain *kabbalos* upon ourselves, because we have failed to fulfill them in the past. But we must know that the very act of submission to Hashem and humility before Hashem are extremely precious—and they will eventually bring a person the *siyata diShmaya* to succeed. We may feel distant from success, and this prevents us from making resolutions—but the truth is that the resolution and the desire themselves will open the door to success.

by having compassion upon the creations. This is how we become Godly, and this is how we invoke Divine compassion—because we have tethered ourselves to the Source of goodness.

▼ Sticking to the System

This was always the plan of creation: That *Yidden* should always look for ways to be compassionate...to always be preoccupied with *feelings* of compassion and *acts* of compassion. A *Yid* must devote himself to *tzedakah*, *chessed*, *bikur cholim*, etc.—not because this person is so needy, but *because he wants to give compassion*. Automatically, when a *Yid* follows the system that Hashem has designed, the world will align.

Sometimes, a person is weighed down by heavy debt, and he goes through tremendous challenges—all because he's too consumed with “taking.” The more we try to take, the less of a giver we become, and the less compassionate we become, and with this we depart from the way the world is intended to work. We must learn to give instead of take, and then we will, *be'ezras*

Hashem, see incredible mercy and kindness from Above.

▼ Being Compassionate

This doesn't necessarily mean giving money. There are many wealthy people who help their children with money, but then they complain that their children are ungrateful. “*Why don't they appreciate what I give them? I give them so much! I married them off, I supported them.... Why do they hate me?!?*”

Of course, every case is different, and there are so many variables in every relationship. But in certain instances, the reason for this is that **the Ribbono shel Olam wants us to become compassionate people**. Don't give money just because you can allow yourself to—give of yourself for the purpose of connecting to the Source of good and to channel the behavior of the Ribbono shel Olam. And the more we conduct ourselves this way—doing the *hishtadlus* of having compassion for others and davening for heavenly compassion—the more we will indeed awaken the Source of compassion for everything good.

Purchasing an Alarm Clock: An Act of Bittul

A person who walks into an electronics store looking for the most effective alarm clock that will awaken him, but not the rest of the household, is submitting himself to Hashem.

This person acknowledges that things cannot go on as they have been, and he must do *something* to change. Buying an alarm clock won't change him overnight, but something *does* change within him when he takes that first step—because **he “gave [his] heart to understand and to humble himself.”** The change takes place within the heart! In everything a person wishes to change, if he thinks about it and reflects upon it, he fulfills the Chazal *פתחו לי פתח כחודו של מוח*, *to open that little door*. This idealism, this optimism, this energy and desire to succeed purify us and enable Hashem to bring us close.

The *yesod* is that there's *always something* we can do—even if it isn't in the practical realm—which will bring us *kirvas Elokim* and *siyata diShmaya* in our spiritual goals.

Changing the Program

Sometimes, we begin the journey with a certain program in

▼ Our Essence Is a Vessel

Chazal tell us that *Yidden* have three unique attributes—רחמנים, ביישנים, וגומלי חסדים, *they are compassionate, they are modest, and they perform acts of kindness*. These are the unique characteristics with which every *Yid* is blessed.

This doesn't just mean that compassion is a *Yiddishe* emotion. This is true, of course. But there's something much deeper here, and that is that **a *Yid* is completely submissive and *bateil* to Hashem!** The character and the essence of a *Yid* is to be an empty vessel that is ready to accept the *Shechinah* by channeling the *middos* of Hashem—and *this* is why we have these attributes. Every time a *Yid* experiences a thought of *teshuvah*, he makes room for the Ribbono she Olam; every time he withholds from an *aveirah*, he makes room for the Ribbono shel Olam; every time he appreciates his own lowliness and experiences true humility, he has now made room for the Ribbono shel Olam.

And when we encounter such a *Yid*, we have encountered the Ribbono

shel Olam Himself, as it were. If so, it is no surprise that we possess the qualities of רחמנים, ביישנים, וגומלי חסדים—for where there's השראת השכינה, there are automatically the *middos* of Hashem.

▼ The Chariot of Chessed

The Mishnah in *Avos* says, חביבין ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום, *precious are the Jewish People, for they are considered sons of the Omnipresent*. *Avos* d'Rabbi Nosson says, חביבין ישראל שנבראו בצלם, *precious are the Jewish People for they were created in the Divine form*. The Rishonim on these *mishnayos* explain that the Ribbono shel Olam's love for us is so great because He has created us as vessels that will serve as a chariot for His Presence, and because we will be mirror images of Him.

When we encounter a *Yid* who spends his days and nights on behalf of other *Yidden*—he's constantly on the phone raising funds for those in need; he does *chessed* even for those who wronged him... he's nevertheless compassionate—it is a clear sign that this is an exalted *Yid* who allows the *Shechinah* to rest upon him. And when we allow the *Shechinah* in,

mind—but it soon becomes clear that the Ribbono shel Olam wants something completely different from us. For example, a person sat down to learn, but he's soon confronted with the need to do something that cannot be done by anyone else. He was on the way to *Kol Nidrei*, and he heard a baby crying....

This is especially common for women, especially during the approaching *Yamim Noraim*. She wanted to go to shul and pour out her heart in prayer, but it turns out that the children need her.

It is often **this very act of *bittul* to Hashem's will that accomplishes more than anything.** This is the pinnacle of *avodah*, and this is what we're talking about. The action and the initiative we take in our hearts to submit to Hashem's program is actually the very key to open the door to spiritual success... because *you gave it your heart*.

And so, a *Yid* must understand that there is no such thing as a situation that prevents us from serving Hashem. There's always an *avodah* to be done, and there is always a heart to commit and submit.

we automatically become compassionate, just as Hashem is.

▼ *Becoming Compassionate*

The Ribbono shel Olam is asking us to be smart and walk on the proper path for life. Become *the type of person who is compassionate*. Look for ways to help others and be compassionate toward them. Daven for another Yid and have *rachmanus* on another Yid.

Sometimes, the Ribbono shel Olam doesn't even ask us to devote our entire day to helping others, or even to give our money to them. Sometimes, all He asks is that we simply have *rachmanus* on others and think about their plight. Even if we think that this person may not be worthy of our compassion, *just as He is compassionate, so too must we be. This is the greatest way of arousing Divine compassion in addition to tefillah.*

▼ *Perhaps I'm Not Sufficiently Compassionate?*

If a person takes stock and sees that he's not sufficiently compassionate,

he must make a reckoning the way the brothers of Yosef HaTzaddik took stock and realized that they didn't have compassion when he pleaded with them for his life. When they were being punished, they realized that they hadn't been merciful enough.

When we experience challenges and suffering, Chazal tell us to make a reckoning... to think about those areas of our lives that we wouldn't ordinarily think about. *If we want Hashem to have rachmanus on us, we must make sure that we have compassion for others.*

Compassion for the Children Brings Compassion for the Parents

▼ *Why Children Must Rely on Their Parents*

This brings us back to the point we have discussed earlier: The Ribbono shel Olam designed the world so that young children are reliant on their parents for every minute detail of their lives.

We discussed that this is a benefit to the child, so he will learn the concept of trust that he can later

Don't Put It Off

There's no such thing as planning our *avodah* for the future... *it seems to me that I'll be able to begin learning with a chavrusa in a few weeks' time...* as if it's a delivery that arrives within ten business days. It must begin to work immediately, at the moment that a person accepts it upon himself.

For this reason, the Torah says, *לא רחוקה היא ממך*, *it is not distant from you*. Nothing is too distant! And this is the lesson of Rabbi Zeira: If the *goyim* don't allow us to fast, then it must be that our *avodah* is to come close to Hashem without fasting. Each one of us knows what he must repair, and that first small step that we can take right now is what will give us the *siyata diShmaya* to succeed. Waiting for another day is a mistake.

The *Krias Shema she'al HaMitah* of tonight will bring you the *chavrusa* tomorrow. **What you can do right now is your *avodah*.** This is why Chazal said that *עניי עירך קודמים*, *the paupers of your city come first*. Why is this? Because **these are the people Hashem put in front of you right now.** And the same applies to every *avodah*

channel to trusting in Hashem.

But here, we're learning that this is not only a benefit to the child—but to the parents as well! The Ribbono shel Olam has directly designed the world this way—parents should become accustomed to giving of themselves, thereby becoming innately compassionate people. Parents must dote on their children, because this makes the *adults* into better people. Through this, they become *davuk* in the *middos* of Hashem, in turn earning the compassion of Hashem.

▼ Compassion for a Newborn Child Arouses Divine Compassion

Chazal tell us, בא זכר לעולם, *when a male child comes into the world, he brings a new flow of shefa along with him* (Niddah 31b). We generally invoke this Chazal to make the point that we needn't worry... Hashem sends the *shefa* along with the children the He gives us. Those distant from Torah and mitzvos cannot understand this. *A family of sixteen children?! How can you possibly feed so many mouths?* But we know the truth that

every child is a blessing.... A family with many children is a blessed family.

But there's something deeper in this Chazal. According to what we've been saying, when a person has many children, he is forced to have more *rachmanus*. He simply has no choice but to have *rachmanus* on them. And if so, it will of course be בכרו בידו, *there will be bread in his hand*. Because when we have *rachmanus*, we awaken *rachmei Shamayim*, which brings us an endless flow of *shefa*.

▼ A Flow of Nachas, Thanks to Compassion

Often, we see this play out in families blessed with an unwell or special-needs child. One aspect of this *nisayon* is that it's never over.... It goes on for years and years—years of sleepless nights and hospital stays... with parents often going for weeks without sleeping in a proper bed. Sometimes, there's humiliation accompanying all the suffering. Nevertheless, these parents persevere in their mission with endless patience and compassion for their special children.

that Hashem places in front of us right now; this is the key and the steppingstone to all the successes you're seeking.

You or Me?

It may be that a *Yid* feels very broken. He wishes to serve Hashem in one way, but it turned out that Hashem wants something else from him. He sighs as he says, "It didn't work out." ***Of course it worked out! The Ribbono shel Olam wanted to see whether he is here to serve Him or himself....***

If we're here to serve Hashem, then why does it matter which *avodah* we're doing? Why are we complaining? A servant doesn't challenge his master: *Why did you ask me to prepare tea...? I wanted to make a coffee!*

When we reflect on it, we will see that our schedules and programs change constantly, and this is because the Ribbono shel Olam tests us constantly to see whether we're truly here to serve Him or ourselves. When we understand this and engage in the *avodah* of now, we have now opened the tiny door, and then all the doors of *siyata diShmaya* will surely be opened wide before us.

We often see that in such cases, these parents are blessed with a flow of *nachas* from their other children. Parents who accept this *nisayon* as a gift, caring for their child with compassion and love, see much success in other areas of their lives, and they merit to establish beautiful generations.

▼ A Conduit for Compassion

Superficially, we may look at it as if Hashem “makes up for” the struggle in other ways. On one hand, He gives a great *nisayon*, but He compensates for it by giving us more *siyata diShmaya* in other areas. This is true as well. But really, there’s an even simpler explanation why these parents succeed in other areas of life: It’s built into the design of the world that those who are compassionate will see *shefa* come to them.

When parents sacrifice with compassion for one child—and they don’t always see where it leads to or the point of it all... after all, this child isn’t even obligated in Torah and mitzvos, and he will likely never change... and nevertheless, these parents sacrifice again and again—this awakens such Divine mercy in *Shamayim*. These parents become a conduit for the *shefa* of Hashem in the greatest ways. Even if they make occasional mistakes in *chinuch*, the Ribbono shel Olam

shields them from it because they’re a conduit for His *shefa*.

This is just one example of the way that we arouse Divine compassion when we behave compassionately.

▼ Getting Through Giving

This point is essentially stated in the *Gemara*: Tornus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva, “If the Ribbono shel Olam loves the poor, why doesn’t He feed them? Said Rabbi Akiva, “It is so *we* should be spared from the judgment of *Gehinnom* through them. By showing them compassion, we receive more than we give! (*Bava Basra* 11a).

This applies to all sorts of poverty and lack that a person experiences. It all has the same purpose: that *we should* accrue merits through our compassion for them. Sometimes, we have compassion for suffering children and we must take them to the doctor; sometimes we must have compassion for those with a difficult nature and we must be patient with them; other times, we must be compassionate toward a boy who struggles to find his place in yeshivah, and we must be *mechazek* him, and so forth.

Whenever a *Yid* shows *rachmanus* of any kind toward another *Yid*, he doesn’t only

merit earning Divine compassion for himself; he also draws down *rachmanus* for the entire creation.

▼ The Proper Hishtadlus to Earn Compassion

In closing, we must note that at times people think that to earn compassion they must go to another person to unburden their problems to that person to move him to compassion. “I’ll cry... I’ll emote... I’ll stomp my feet... until he takes pity on me.”

But this is a grave mistake. Just as we know with regard to *hishtadlus* for *parnassah* that we must do only as much as is required, and we must do the *hishtadlus* in the proper way, so too it is with *hishtadlus* for *rachmanus*—and the proper *hishtadlus* is to give *rachamim* to others. This expresses our *צלם אלקים*, because we channel the *middah* of Hashem. And then the Ribbono shel Olam says, “I will automatically give you *rachmanus* and provide for all your needs.”

The truth is that we can daven for this itself! Just as we daven for *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem, we can ask Hashem for the proper emotions of compassion for other *Yidden*. And then, we will clearly see the fulfillment of the *pasuk*, כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמים עליו מן השמים, *one who has compassion for the creations earns Divine compassion*.

Point to Ponder

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Feeling Like Children

Our relationship with the Ribbono shel Olam is בנים אתם לה. There's a tremendous mutual love between us, just like a father who pines for his son to succeed, and even when he must punish him, it is as the *pasuk* says: כאשר ייסר איש את בנו ה' אלקיך מייסרך, *just as a man disciplines his son, so Hashem, your G-d, disciplines you.* The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that most people don't care if someone else's child does something wrong. It is only when *our* child errs that we're moved to reprimand him—out of sheer love.

If a *Yid* were to feel this relationship of בנים אתם, he would sin far less, and he would always come to reconcile with Hashem. The problem is that we don't feel it enough. The Ribbono shel Olam has such an incredible love for us, and we walk around in the world completely oblivious to that closeness and love.

Even *Yidden* who do everything they're should...

they know all about Hashem, they daven to Hashem and cry out to Him... yet they still don't sufficiently experience the feeling of בנים אתם לה. Such a person says the words אבינו מלכנו... אבינו אב הרחמן but he still doesn't continually feel that Hashem looks at him as if he were an only child.

(Sadly, sometimes this happens because people don't understand the metaphor. They don't really understand the ideal relationship between a father and son. There's no closeness, and therefore they have trouble comprehending the father-and-son relationship with Hashem. But this, too, is part of the *avodah* of repairing our connection with Hashem).

Getting to Know Him...

So, how can a person acquire the feeling of love that exists between us and Hashem? For this, there's a very practical approach: Generally, when two people are distant from each other, they don't know the person.

But when people are close, we begin to know him and feel him—as Rashi says regarding the *pasuk* כי ידעתיו.... When we love a person, we know his character and his personality, and we feel his love.

The same applies to the Ribbono shel Olam. The closer we are to Hashem, the more we speak to Him, the more we will begin to feel the connection we have with Him.

At first, when we approach Hashem and begin talking to Him, we may not yet feel that extreme closeness as of a father to a son. We might daven for our needs the way a collector comes into the home of a *gvir*... *if there's money being distributed, let me get in on it*.... But slowly, as we become accustomed to speaking to Hashem about everything in our lives, even if we don't yet have the feeling and the understanding, we will steadily acquire the deep sense of connection.

Following Chazal's Formula

When a *Yid* follows the prescription of Chazal regarding Torah, *tefillah*, the one hundred daily *berachos*, and the recitation of *Tehillim*—he thanks the Ribbono shel Olam for everything in his life; he recognizes that everything is with the help of Hashem: *He gave me my food, He provided my needs, He made me healthy today, and He continues to help me even when I don't behave as I should*—this enables him to begin feeling the *בנים אתם לה' אלוהים*.

The *avodah* of a *Yid* is thus to **speak to Hashem through Torah and *tefillah*, through *Tehillim* and *berachos*, and to rely on Hashem with deep *bitachon*.** This will bring a person the feeling of *בנים אתם*, and it will leave a deep impression upon him regarding all aspects of his life and the *nisyonos* in his life.

Preparing to Feel Close

The Torah teaches us this *pasuk* regarding the unfortunate case of when a person suffers the loss of a loved one, and how we must not behave in such an

instance. This is precisely the time when a person must most experience the feeling of *בנים אתם לה'*—but this is *not* the time to *begin* developing this feeling. It's difficult to feel that love during a time of extreme challenge. We must work on forming this relationship during good times so that it will be there for us when we need it most.

The relationship must be formed when we're speaking to Hashem through *tefillah* and *berachos*, and then we will merit that Hashem will reveal Himself to us and we will feel His love. Later, when a *Yid* finds himself in the dark, he says, "*That same Ribbono shel Olam to Whom I spoke earlier, and toward Whom I felt that deep feeling of בנים אתם לה', He is here with me right now! He sees me! He understands me and everything I am going through.*"

Entering Elul

We *lein* the *pasuk* *בנים אתם* on Shabbos Mevarchim Elul—and this *pasuk* is indeed a wonderful introduction to the month of Elul... a month so filled with love

and closeness, a month in which Hashem seeks the closeness of every *Yid*.

And before we even enter the month, the Ribbono shel Olam announces to us that everyone can be accepted. Regardless of our situation, regardless of what we did, it doesn't matter. There's a big promotion going on—a time when the Ribbono shel Olam wants to get to know us, help us, and have *rachmanus* upon us.

Closeness for Those Who Most Need It

Chazal tell us that the *Shechinah* hovers over the bed of a sick person. The Maharal (Netzach Yisrael II) gives us two reasons for this: One is that a sick person is naturally humble, and for this reason the *Shechinah* can be with him. The second is that **Hashem is found by those who need Him most.** When someone hovers between life and death, he is so much more in need of Hashem's grace, and for this reason Hashem is closer to him than to anyone else.

We all know how much we have sinned, how much we have erred.... We're no different from a dangerously ill person. We're so much in need of *yeshuah*, and we must return to the proper path.... Who among us can say that he's not sick? But the Ribbono shel Olam comes *davka* to such people in such a situation! Why? Because He's the Source of benevolence and kindness. He says, **"My child is sadly so tarnished... I must help him."**

Remembering Hashem by Speaking to Him

The very act of speaking to Hashem is greatly beneficial in helping us appreciate how much Hashem wants us. In Chodesh Elul, we say *Tehillim*, we say *L'Dovid Hashem Ori...* **it's a time when we're more open and forthright with Hashem.**

One of the rules of a good friendship is that we don't forget about the person. If a person goes away on a trip, and forgets to call home for a few days... then he calls to see what's happening, he will be told to forget it;

it's not relevant anymore. **If you forgot to speak to me for a few days, it means I'm not part of your life.** I'm an errand, a headache that must be resolved.

When a person has a true bond with someone, he thinks about it the entire day. We see this when people have a married child in another country. They're constantly thinking, *"What time is it there now? Ah, he's probably eating the Friday-night seudah right now..."* He "experiences" his child's schedule, because he has a deep connection with him.

The same applies to our *kesher* with the Ribbono shel Olam. This person who feels this *kesher* will constantly to speak to Hashem. *"Don't cast me away... Help me return to the proper path; I can't do it alone."* He's vulnerable with Hashem, and the lines of communication are always open—as the Gemara (*Berachos* 21a) says in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, *"Halevai that people would daven all day long."* This is how the bond is built: when we daven for

everything, when we thank for everything, and when we speak with Hashem about everything.

Elul: A Month of Ahavas Hashem

So long as a *Yid* doesn't speak openly with Hashem, he will not feel the closeness of *בנים אתם לה*. He forgets the love that Hashem has for him. And this is such a shame—because the love is always there even if we don't feel it. Later, when we encounter a challenge, it's so much harder to acquire the feeling.

As we prepare to enter a month of so much love, we can utilize this time by speaking often with the Ribbono shel Olam. We must say *Tehillim* while understanding what we're saying, we must think about our *berachos*, and have in mind what we're saying in our *tefillos*. This will enable us to feel the love of *בנים אתם לה*, and when we feel the love, everything goes easier. We do fewer *aveiros*, and our *teshuvah* is so much more sincere, potent, and powerful.

