



## UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE

### CAN ROADS MOURN?

Tonight's subject *be'eizer Hashem*, is to figure out the purpose of our lives in this world, for each one of us. One of the most fundamental principles of Judaism is that there is no creature that exists, that was created for no reason, or by chance. Every single one of the creatures in the universe has a specific purpose. That's a mind boggling concept. Every blade of grass, every ant, and every fly has a purpose in Hashem's creation. That's principle number one.

Principle number two is that every single one of the creatures of Hashem, yearns and seeks to fulfill its purpose for which it was created. The cow, the horse, or a tree - every creation wants to fulfill its purpose. And if they don't fulfill that purpose they actually experience what is called a mourning process. One of sadness. Yes, you can have "sad" trees.

What's the source of this? On *Tisha Ba'av* we read *Eichah*, where it says a very strange sentence. It says as follows: דרכי אבילות, *the roads of Zion are in mourning*, מבלי באי מועד, *empty of festival pilgrims* - no one is coming on them for the holidays (Eichah 1:4).

We have to understand: what is the meaning of דרכי אבילות - the roads are in mourning? Also, it doesn't say that the roads are in mourning because there are no people upon them and they are desolate. It says the reason why the roads are in mourning is that "people are not coming for the holidays." Now, if you take a look in the *medrash* (Eichah Rabbah 1:30), it says as follows.<sup>1</sup> Everything seeks to fulfill its purpose for which it was created, even stones. And it says even trees, even roadways. A roadway is a compilation of stones or it's a strip of land that has been cut through the forest. It seeks to fulfill its purpose and when it doesn't fulfill its purpose, the road itself goes into a state of mourning.

So principle number one is that everything has a specific purpose, and number two, is that everything yearns and seeks to fulfill its purpose. Furthermore, we see that the purpose of every creation is to bring *kevod Shamayim*, honor to Hashem. It's not a side purpose. Sometimes it might look like a side purpose to us, but really, the ultimate purpose of any creation is to bring honor to Hashem. This is what it says in the *mishnah* at the end of *Pirkei Avos*. Every single thing Hakadosh Baruch Hu created in this world, was created *lechvodo* (Avos 6:11).<sup>2</sup> That is, for us to come and recognize Him. *Kavod* of Hashem is not because Hashem seeks *kavod*. It means that we should see the greatness of Hashem and His glory and we should want to get close to Him and know Him and fulfill His will.

### STONES HAVE FEELINGS

That is why the Midrash says, do you know why the "stones are sad"? Not because no one is traveling on the road. Not because people aren't walking there. It is because the purpose of the roads in Eretz Yisrael is that people should use them to be *oleh regel* - to visit the *Beis Hamikdash* three times a year, because it is the *mitzvah* on the *mo'eid*, on Yom Tov, as the *passuk* says, יראה כל זכורך, *all your people should come and visit Hashem* (Devarim 16:16). Before and during the *mo'adim* hundreds of thousands of Jews descended to Yerushalayim from all corners of Eretz Yisrael on Yomim Tovim, and then the roads were "happy." But even when people might be going on the roads, if these roads are not serving *kevod Shamayim*, if they are not serving the honor of Hashem they were destined for, then the roads go into a state of mourning.

Whenever something is missing something, that's considered a state of mourning. That's why when somebody loses a loved one, he observes a mourning period, called *aveilus*. *Aveilus* means he lost somebody. He lost something. Conversely, when you gain something, you say *shirah*, because you are in a state of *simchah* and because now you are fulfilling its purpose.

### LISTENING TO THE WORLD'S MESSAGES

*Chazal* tell us the following. The *pasuk* says: ממזרח שמש עד מבוא, from the *mizrach*, the eastern rising of the sun until it sets in the west, גדול שמי בונים, *My Name becomes great amongst the nations of the world* (Tehillim 113:3). So the Sages explain the

<sup>1</sup> דרכי ציון אבילות, אמר רב הונא הכל מבקשין תפקידן, מעשה בכלבא אחת מופרית שעלתה לראש הסלע ושמשוה עם זכר רבי אמי אמר אפלו ארזים מבקשין תפקידן, תדע לך שלא היו ארזים בבבל, וכשעלה נבוכדנצר לקאן, תלש ארזים מקאן ושתלן בבבל, וכשמת היו שמחים על מפתחו, הדיא הוא דכתיב (ישעיה י"ח): גם ברושים שמחו לך ארזי לבנון. אמר רבי אבדימי דמן חיפה אפלו דרכים מבקשין תפקידן, הדיא הוא דכתיב: דרכי ציון אבילות באי מועד, מכלי בורגנין מבלי בולטין, אין כתיב כאן, אלא מבלי באי מועד, כל שעריה שוממין, שלא היו נכנסין ויוצאין בהן, וכו'.  
<sup>2</sup> כל מה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו, לא בראו אלא לכבודו, שנאמר (ישעיה מג), כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתיו יצרתיו אף עשיתיו, ואומר (שמות טו), הי ימלך לעלם ועד

meaning of this *passuk*, that from the moment that the sun begins to shine in the morning until it sets in the evening, the praise of Hashem does not cease from the sun's "lips." When you look at the sun and you see beautiful sunshine or a beautiful sunrise or sunset, what you're witnessing is the praises of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. *השמים מספרים כבוד קל ומעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע*, *the heavens tell of the honor of Hashem* (Tehillim 19:2). When you look at beautiful foliage, you look at beautiful weather, you look at hot weather - everything foretells the *kavod* of Hashem. Even though you don't hear it, that's what the world is about and our job is to listen. If the world is talking to us, we have to listen. We have to seek out the honor and the greatness of Hashem from everything that is in the *briah*, in the creation.

Now, man is no less than anything that Hashem created that's not human. Every single human being has a very unique and extraordinary mission. I say extraordinary because the mission of mankind, human beings, is much greater than the mission of other creations of Hashem. Every single part of mankind has a mission to teach about the greatness of Hashem.

I'll give you an example. My grandfather (Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l) used to always speak about this. Suppose, you ask most people why their fingers are shaped like they are. Why are they this shape? Why aren't they square? Now, the *gemara* actually asks this question. Some guy might come up with an idea, "Well, it's easier to drive a car that way. It's easier to cook that way. It's easier to sweep the floor. You can make the bed easier." Whatever the person might think.

But the *gemara* (Kesubos 5b) tells us that the reason why Hashem shaped our fingers the way they are, is that when a person hears stupidity coming out from the mouths of others, he should stick the tips of his fingers into his ears.<sup>3</sup> The ears were shaped in a specific fashion and design, so that the finger fits into the ear. It's amazing. Hashem created a system that there were certain things He didn't want you to hear. He wants you to have ear plugs. So instead of carrying them with you, He formulated your fingers in their particular shape.

The *gemara* also asks, why are the fingers different lengths? It's amazing what the *gemara* says. The *gemara* says each length represents a different *halachah* because each length refers to different measurements. There are many measurements in *halachah* regarding different things and every finger has a different size so when a person looks at his hand he should remind himself of a slew of *halachos*, of Jewish laws.

Now, this is simply amazing! Look at your hand. Wow! Isn't it amazing how it's shaped? How all the joints are created and how they bend precisely and align perfectly when you form a fist! So, of course, there are all these wonderful things that we could talk about, but the main purpose is to bring *kevod Shamayim*.

## THE PURPOSE OF HANDS

If you ask a person, "Why do you have hands?" he will probably say, "That's how you get things done." No, that's not why you have hands. The main reason you have hands is to put on *tefillin*. The main reason you have hands is to do *chessed*. That's why a woman has hands - to do kindness. Everything else she may do, like feeding herself, cleaning herself, cleaning her home, or whatever else she may enjoy doing - is only a side benefit. But you see, we don't view our hands that way. We view them as, "these are my hands, and they are there to serve me, they are for my benefit." Many people may even say, "Yes, Hashem gave me my hands, *baruch Hashem*. And in lieu of that, Hashem asked me to do some *mitzvos* with my hands, like putting on *tefillin*, doing *chessed*, writing checks to *tzedakah*, or cooking a meal for someone." It's not true. It's just the opposite. The main purpose of everything that exists in our body, every single part of our body is related to the honor of Hashem. And that's why if you take note of the *mitzvos*, if you ever begin to study the different *mitzvos* of the Torah, they're not random. Every single *mitzvah* relates to a different part of the body. It's amazing.

## EXERCISES FOR HEALTHY HEART AND FEET

There's a *sefer* called *Sefer Hachareidim*. It's a wonderful *sefer*, written by Rav Elazar Azikri (1533-1600), who was a contemporary of the Arizal, of Rav Shlomo Alkabetz, and of the Beis Yosef, great *tzaddikim*. What the author does in this *sefer* is simply amazing. He lists every single *mitzvah* that's related to different parts of the body. He lists *mitzvos* you can do with your mouth, your eyes, your mind, your heart, your feet, your ears, your windpipe or food pipe. It's just amazing! He begins to chart for a person the function and the purpose of our limbs and organs, of which most of us have no concept. We don't even connect these dots.

Here is a person who is strong on vitamins. Vitamin A for this, and C for that, and D for this. This type of supplement or food is good for the green stuff and for the yellow stuff, and for the white blood cell count, and the red blood cell count, for the brain and for the heart. Who knows what it's good for? Regardless, he's very interested in his vitamins and supplements. But a person has to understand that with the methodology this *Sefer* introduces us to, Hashem lets us know in what area of our *Avodah* we are short and what area we need to strengthen. And this is so important because we live in a world where illnesses are common.

<sup>3</sup> דרש בר קפרא, מאי דכתבי: "ויתד תהיה לך על אוזןך". אל תקרי "אזןך", אלא "על אוזןך" - שאם ישמע אדם דבר שאינו הגון, יניח אצבעו באוזנו. והיינו דאמר רבי אלעזר: מפני מה אצבעותיו של אדם דומות ליתדות? מאי טעמא? אילימא משום דמחלקן, כל חדא וחדא למילתיה עבידא. דאמר מר: זו זרת. זו קמיצה. זו אמה. זו אצבע. זה גודל. אלא: מה טעם משופות כיתדות - שאם ישמע אדם דבר שאינו הגון, יניח אצבעותיו באוזנו. תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: מפני מה אחזן כולה קשה והאליה רכה? שאם ישמע אדם דבר שאינו הגון, יכוף אליה לתוכה. תנו רבנן: אל ישמע אדם לאוזנו דברים בטלים, מפני שהן נכות תחלה לאיברים.



Even if you tell the boss, “What do clothes have to do with my job? I’m doing a wonderful job. So if I come in my ‘birthday suit,’ what difference does it make? Can’t you just chill out?” The boss will tell you, “Are you out of your mind?” There’s a certain decorum and environment in any business setting. You have to be well behaved. You have to know how to talk to people. You have to know how to behave with people. Even though it’s not necessarily directly related to the job.

So it’s the exact same thing in Yiddishkeit. Therefore, we need to know all the *mitzvos*. We have to do as many *mitzvos* as we can, and a person has to know this and ensure that he has a healthy system and a healthy environment within which he fulfills the *mitzvos*.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

The whole entire person has a specific purpose to fulfill in this world and we want to know how a person figures out what that specific purpose is. Now, we all intrinsically know and accept that in the world of education, everybody has to know the basics: how to read, write and do math, science, and geography. But does that mean that everybody is going to be a mathematician? No. Does it mean everybody is going to be a scientist? No. Everybody is going to specialize in a certain area. One guy is going to go into economics. One guy will go into law. One guy is going to be a teacher. But you don’t know that yet. So too in Yiddishkeit. We all have the basics. That’s for starters. Only after we’ve got these basics down, then we can try to figure out what our specific purpose in this world is.

Now, many people ask me right away, as soon as they become aware of Yiddishkeit, “So what’s my purpose?” That’s like a kid asking you in kindergarten, “Daddy, what am I going to be when I grow up.” I have no idea. I don’t know if you’re good at math. I don’t know if you’re good at technical things. I don’t know if you’re good at surgery. Are you good at medicine? Are you good at law? What are you, a mathematician? What do you like to do? You can’t know. It’s not possible. And frankly, it’s a ridiculous question. You first have to get the basics down and then it’s possible to begin to delve into this subject.

The Ramchal, Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato was one of the greatest Jewish thinkers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote numerous works. One of his works is called *Mesillas Yesharim*, The Pathway of the Righteous. He says in this famous work that the foundation of any growth in life is to *yesbarer*, to clarify, *veyesames*, and to verify, *eitzel ha’adam*, for a man, *ma chovaso b’olamo*, what his mission is in his world.<sup>6</sup> I exist in my own world. My world may interact with other worlds, but my own world, my life, has a mission that’s totally and uniquely mine.

### CAN YOU SENSE YOUR MISSION?

Now, many people don’t even know there is a sense of mission. Some guys say, “Okay, I hear. Maybe I have a mission.” But it’s not clear to them. There are many people who have a sense of mission, but it’s not their true mission. I’ll give you an example. Many people do things that are unhealthy and when you ask them whether this is a healthy thing to do, they say that it is not. “So why do you do it then?” They often say, “I don’t know.” What that means is that, even though it’s clear in their minds that this behavior is unhealthy, it has not yet become, what we call, *emes*. It has not become true to them yet. It has not been totally verified or acknowledged by them yet. They don’t have what’s called a sensory perception of that mission yet. It’s only intellectual but it’s not real yet. It has to be brought down to a sense of reality in the real world.

Every one of us has to know, he says, and clarify to ourselves that we have a mission. In other words, it has to become reality to you. I meet a lot of kids in high school and I say to them, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” They tell me, “I’m going to be a doctor.” So I’m thinking to myself, “Are you out of your mind? I mean, do you think you can wake up one day from a dream-like state and go to medical school? No. You have to prepare for that.” So I told the kid, “But you’re such a poor student. How are you going to be a doctor?” You see, in his mind he wants to be a doctor, but he never turned that into reality in his life. If you want to go to law school, you need to have certain basics. If you want to go to medical school, you have to have certain basics. If you want to go to an economics school, you have to know certain basics. Someone who is going to study biology, it’s going to be pretty rough for him to specialize in economics. You have to know, “Are you working on that area now?”

### THE \$64,000 QUESTION

A person has to know, says Ramchal, this is the essence of what a person’s job is in this world, to constantly focus on and ask himself: “What is my goal?” Now, how do you figure that out? And the answer is as follows. All goals are broken up into one of two choices. This is explained by Rav Yisrael Salanter. There are areas that every one of us needs to learn how to control ourselves. There are certain areas that every one of us struggles with the “crossing over of the fences.” Most people don’t struggle with murder. It’s like a tall wall. That’s an iron curtain, for most people. They don’t even go near that curtain. Robbing banks is another wall that most people don’t cross. But when it comes to different kinds of theft, laziness, *emunah*, faith in Hashem, trust in Hashem, different areas of honesty, deception - those are the fences that many of us struggle with. They are fences that are commonly broken. Who is not challenged by ego? Everybody is challenged by ego. Even though everybody will tell you arrogance is a flaw, and that

<sup>6</sup> יסוד החסידות ושרש העבודה התמימה הוא שיתברר ויתאמת אצל האדם מה חובתו בעולמו ולמה צריך שישים מבטו ומגמתו בכל אשר הוא עמל כל ימי חייו (מסילת ישרים א':א)

arrogance is not something you can be proud of, and that most people would prefer not to be arrogant (even though they may be attracted to it) - yet people struggle with it. There's an everyday struggle with arrogance.

### FINDING YOUR NICHE

So a person has to understand that half of his obligation deals with things he has to learn not to do. Now, in the "not to do" approach (or what's commonly known as *sur me'rah* - removing yourself from doing evil), there are two aspects. There is a "natural" aspect to it, namely, to maintain your natural base of what you don't want to do. Every one of us is born with a natural conditioning. There are certain things I don't necessarily want to do, and then there are certain things I might really want to do. First of all, you have to maintain, Rav Yisrael says, the things you are strong in maintaining, and keep them up. For example, if you're an honest person, be proud of that honesty and maintain that honesty. Then, there is a second aspect, removing yourself from the things you are not strong in naturally. Here, for example, if you're a dishonest person by nature, then you have to come back within the framework of the Torah and become an honest person. So that's one area of challenge. Another example would be, if a person is a dominating person. They like to dominate others. That's part of their arrogance. Here, too, they have to come back to Torah's framework of not exhibiting control over others.

Then you have the other side of the coin and that's called the *aseh tov*, to do good. Every single one of us has an ability to accomplish something positive. For some people they have the ability to change a community. Some people can be the greatest rabbis in the world and can have a far-reaching impact on the community. There are many people who are great philanthropists and their kindness reaches far and wide. They have a tremendous impact in their sphere of influence and talents as well. They are people who we would call "major league players." Then you have people that in their neighborhoods, or in their cities, have a potential to bring positive change. Then you have people who, on their blocks, have potential. Then you have people that in their homes have potential to be great parents.

A person has to understand this. We have to have a sense of a mission. If somebody is a parent and he doesn't have a sense that my child has to look at me and see me, and that my role is to impact my child's life - that's a problem. It doesn't mean just to tell the child what to do or what not to do. I have to be the role model for that child to look up to and say, "Yes, I have a guide in my life." And then that success is the parent's success and his mission in life.

### LISTENING TO OUR YEITZER TOV

Many people have dreams of fulfilling a mission, but you know what happens? They don't see it through. They get sidetracked. Or somebody knocks them down. They start to undertake something and somebody says to them, "Ah, who do you think you are?" They say, "I'm only trying to help." So they get knocked down and they run away. They run back. That's not greatness. The critics and the naysayers is simply a sign they are on the right path! If somebody knocks them down when they're trying to undertake something good, ooh, that's a sign that they've touched a nerve! That's why they are being challenged! When things go easy that's not a good sign. You know why? Because the *yetzer hara* is a *nudnik*, and it bothers you all day long to do something bad. The *yetzer tov*, on the other hand, is not a *nudnik*. He tells you, "This is a good thing, go for it." He doesn't bug you and bug you and bug you all the time. So it's more difficult to listen to the *yetzer tov*. Do you know why? Advice that comes from the *yetzer tov* is difficult advice to listen to, because you have to make the choice more on your own. The *yetzer hara* constantly baffles you and constantly stays with you, so therefore you give in.

A person has to ask himself until he understands, "What is my mission? What am I going to accomplish in this world? Is it going to be in the area of kindness? What changes could I make to help others?"

I was just speaking to a person who is a highly qualified professional. He went to law school. All of a sudden, he had an opportunity to assist people way above and beyond the normal lawyer's capabilities and he was hesitant as to whether he should undertake this mission. We had a conversation and I said to him, "Do you realize that this could be the sole purpose for which you were created. This could be your moment of greatness, and you're going to pass it up because you have to step out of your bounds and do something that's way above and beyond you. You have to go out of your zone. But you're only able to do this because you have this knowledge and Hashem has presented you with this opportunity to make a change perhaps in many other people's lives." A person has to realize that it's his responsibility to step out of his comfort zone when a unique opportunity comes his way to positively impact others.

### FEELING THE CHALLENGE IS A GOOD SIGN

Now does this mean you should not enjoy your challenge? No. You can enjoy your challenge. But if you're not challenged, if you don't feel you're going up against something, if you feel when you're doing it that this is what you want to do, it's clearly not your challenge, because every challenge has to come with something to overcome. **אדם לעמל יולד**, the Torah tells us a "man is born to toil." (Iyov 5:7). If there's no toil in what you're doing, it's clearly not the service for which you came to this world for.

Then Rav Yisroel says a frightening thing. Listen to what he says. He says that it's very possible for a person to be sent to this world, and one of his missions is to develop a strong sense of honesty. The only way you can develop a strong sense of honesty is by going into business, and if you don't go into business, you're not going to develop a strong sense of honesty. Some

jobs are easier than others to develop a sense of honesty. This fellow, however, doesn't have a lot of money. You know what he decides to do? He's going to become a rebbi. He's going to sit and learn. Learning is easy. He's the kind of guy that learning comes easy to him. It doesn't seem to be a challenge. It's not a challenge of honesty and dishonesty. So he goes into a *yeshiva* where he sits and studies, and then he becomes a great scholar. Rav Yisroel Salanter says in his sefer *Ohr Yisroel*, that when he comes to the next world, you never know what Hashem says? "You have no place in the world to come. You have thrown off the yoke of G-d from day one. You have quit your job. You never served Hashem for one second! You served yourself! You did what you wanted to do. You never worked on yourself one day in your life. You know why? Because you never overcame anything. You never faced a challenge for which you were created. You just avoided that completely."<sup>7</sup>

### AN OBNOXIOUS GRANDCHILD

Now, it doesn't mean to say that if a person was thinking, "Should I become a doctor or not," he should never become a doctor. There are definitely some people that are cut out to be doctors and some people cut out to be lawyers and some people cut out to be business people. A person has to understand that sometimes if you have an ability to do something and the reason why you're rejecting it is because of laziness - because you say, "Why should I work hard" - then you have to be very careful and very concerned as to whether you are forsaking the job for which you came to this world. This is the reality of life.

Here is a person who has difficult parents. Having difficult parents is very common. Every second person I meet tells me his parents are difficult. I'm not sure if it's true or not anymore. I think they have a difficult child, not difficult parents. But that's your perception that you have difficult parents. How do you face this challenge? I will tell you how most people deal with this challenge. Most people run away from it. I have met many people who don't talk to their parents.

I met a guy who didn't talk to his parents for seven years. I said, "Are you crazy?! You don't talk to your parents?! Why not? How could you not talk to your parents?!" I met a girl who told me, "I have no interaction with my mother. I don't like my mother. She's not a good person. I was told to stay away from her." I said, "Who told you that? You think Hashem gave you that mother for that reason?"

People often have difficult children. Here is a woman who came to see me a few weeks ago and she tells me she is dealing with a very, very extremely obnoxious grandson. This is the most wonderful, sweetest woman you've met. She wouldn't hurt a fly in her life. I believe she never did. All of a sudden, this obnoxious, ruthless, evil is thrown upon her. I met the kid. It's a rarity to see such a level of cruelty and ruthlessness. He doesn't even hide it at all, to the point that I'm not even sure if he's mentally well. But the grandmother is suffering terribly. She comes to see me. She says, "Rabbi, why am I going through this?"

I asked her to tell me about her life. She tells me, "I had a couple of daughters. One was sweet. (That's the one I know). And the other one was extremely obnoxious. I mean really bad. She's still terrible." I said, "What did you do?" "We grew apart," she tells me. I said, "Nu? Do you think you could beat Hashem? Hashem is doing you a favor. Here you had an obnoxious child. That was your challenge. An obnoxious grandchild is also a challenge. You can't run away from a child. A difficult child is part of life. I'm not wishing it on anybody but that's the reality of life. A child is a hard thing to run away from, so Hashem presents you with this child and now you have to deal with it. You have to understand what you could learn from this." I pointed out a number of things she was able to learn that she ignored before. She was a nice person, but she didn't want to work on this. She didn't care to stand up to do the right thing. She wanted to go the easy route. "I don't bother anybody else. I don't want anybody to bother me." I said, "That's not a job. That's not called working. That's called staying at home and doing nothing. You have to accomplish something. Even at home you have to accomplish something. Hashem did you a favor. He sent you this obnoxious grandchild in your elderly years as a mission which you did not fulfill in your youth. Now, you have an opportunity to fulfill it in your older years. Maybe had you fulfilled the mission with your own child, this would have never happened."

### A CHALLENGING MOTHER-IN-LAW

This woman, who struggled with her mother and ignored her mother totally, when she heard this, said to me, "So what should I do?" I said, "Hashem will give you a second chance." The second chance came with her mother-in-law and her father-in-law. That's how it came. She got married and a short while later the "outlaws" asked if they could move in with her. She had just gotten married and the "outlaws" said they wanted to become in-laws. Instead of outside laws they want to

<sup>7</sup> **ובזאת** הלא נודע. כי אדם לעמל יולד, ללחם מלחמת מצוה, והחובה עליו להתיגע בעבודת ד', לא רק לשמר מה שטבעו מניחו מעצמו, ומה שהוא קצת כבודות להניח, כי בזה האופן אין האדם עובד ה' רק הטבע עושה שלה, ויוכל להקרא חלילה פורק על, כאשר לא יתן שום יגיעה לעבודת ד' יתברך שמו, רק לשמר מה שאין עליו על, וזאת הוא היסוד מעבודת האדם לבוראו יתברך שמו, לשמר ולעשות, גם מה שאין לבו חפץ, כי אם לא ישים האדם לבו ונפשו, לעשות נגד רצון לבבו, הרי הוא עלול לכל עברות שבתורה רחמנא לצלן, גם אותן שאינו עובר עליהן מצד הרגלו וטבעו. כי ההרגל והטבע מתחלפים מסבות צדיקות כאשר יאלצם כח אחר המנגד לו, כדומה האיש המתמיד בלמודו מצד הרגלו וטבעו, ויש לו כח נסתר המשחוק לכסף, והכח אינו נכה יעו כי אין לו דרך לזה, כי מצבו והתלכותו אינו דרך המסחור ולא ראה כסף מימיו, ממילא אין להכח נושא במה להאחז, כי הכחות שבאדם כל זמן שאין להם דבר חושי במה להאחז, נסתרים המה בפנימיות הנפש, בל יראו החוצה גם בל נודעו. **אכן** כאשר יהיה איזה סבה שיצטרך לאחז מה במסחור לטרף ביתו וכיוצא, ויכול להתפרץ כח הלוה בקשת הכסף, עד אשר יזניח כמעט תלמודו לגמרי מחמת הכח הלוה, אשר לא היה מאמין על עצמו בשום אופן איך יוכל להיות שיוניח כל כך למודו, וכן בכל הכחות והענינים הטובים שבאדם, ויכול להיות מופרים ממחנות מתנגדים אשר בסבה קטנה יתעוררו בחזקה להפר כל נתח טוב. **לזאת** גם אם העברות הרגילות אשר נעשים כהתר רחמנא לצלן, לא יעוררו את נפש האדם לעסק בלמודו יראת שמים (לזכר אחרייתו ימי החשך כי הרבה יהיו, ועל כל עברה בפרט, ענש יענש בענשים קשים ומרים רחמנא לצלן כמאמרם ז"ל, כל האומר הקדושי-בורוך הוא ותרו הוא ויתרו חייהו אלא מאריך אפו וגבי דליה, ומי יודע עד כמה תגדל הענש אשר שום אחר לא יסבל רק האדם לבדו העושה העברות) להיותם נעשים כהתה אין רואה ואין מרגיש האדם בהם. אך זה יוכל לעורר להאדם, בהתבוננו חלופי הזמן ומקרי העתים אשר עם דבר קטן יוכל הטבע להשתנות ולפל בעברות רמות, אשר ההרגש עדין בתקפו כי עברות המה, ויראתם מרחפת על פניו, לזאת יקדים האדם רפואה לעצמו לעסק בלמוד היראה והמוסר להיעור את רוחו שיוכל לעשות נגד רצונו (אור ישראל י"ז)

become in-laws. “We’re moving in with you. You just got married. We’re not paying rent. We’re going to live off of you.” I am paraphrasing, but that’s how they essentially explained it. They didn’t have any money. The lady calls me up on the phone. She says, “I think this is my challenge.” I said, “You’re right it is!” I said, “Don’t fail the mission this time.” And she didn’t. She passed it with flying colors. And the accomplishment, what happened next, the domino effect of what this woman single handedly accomplished was mind boggling! It’s unbelievable what happened. Today, she gets along with her mother too. I said, “You’re not your mother’s judge.” We don’t choose, ‘if my mother is nice or my mother is not nice.’ Of course, we’d all like to have a nice mother. So what? The reality of life is not like that. The mother you get is what Hashem gave you. You have to see your mother as being the nicest and the best mother for you. That’s how a person can grow from their challenges.

### MARRIAGE WOES

Here’s a couple who’s struggling in their marriage. This is the most common thing. Everybody is convinced they made a mistake. You can’t run away from yourself. So you get divorced the next time it seems to repeat itself. Here is a young man I know who’s considering divorce. I said to him, “The world is not big enough. You can’t hide from yourself. Wherever you go you’re always with yourself. Your shortcomings are always with you.” He tells me, “Maybe I’ll find somebody who won’t challenge me that much.” I told him, “What a silliness! You have to work on this. You cannot run away from it.”

Here’s a young man who had a difficult wife. He calls me up one day, “Rabbi, what should I do? I’ve got to get divorced.” I said, “Let’s create a hypothesis. I’m going to give you a diagnosis. Let’s see what your wife’s difficulty is.” You know what his wife was? His wife was needy. How did her neediness manifest itself? She needed him to do a lot of favors. Give her reassurance. All day long she said, “Tell me you love me.” All day long. “Tell me, do I look pretty?” She would beg for it. She would say to him, “Do I look pretty? Am I nice? Are you happy?” All day long whenever he came to the house. I told him, “If you were smart, you would say it once or twice and she wouldn’t bother you anymore, but you never say it and every time you say, ‘No, you’re not pretty’ and you’re not this and not this, so of course she keeps begging you for it.” I told the guy for the next few weeks he should do *chessed*.

He says to me, “But Rabbi, she went to a therapist. The therapist diagnosed her. She has a problem. She’s emotionally not 100%.” I said, “I agree, but don’t you understand that Hashem gave you this wife. If you fulfill your mission, Hashem could put her ‘under control.’ Hashem could make her behave. She doesn’t do it all the time, right?”

We started a program. I called him every day in the morning and every day he called me at night. We were like this for thirty days. We called each other. I’m telling you we stayed on his case. I said, “Do *chessed* with her.” After thirty days of doing *chessed*, his wife became a new wife. *Mamash* a new person! I told the guy, “You see what happens?”

### STAYING ON THE MISSION

We stopped calling each other. Two weeks later his wife calls me, “My husband is back to his old antics.” I called him on the phone. I said, “Are you a fool? What did you do?” He said, “Rabbi, do you expect me to keep this up for the rest of my life?” I told him, “The whole purpose here is for you to change. Suck it up.” I told the guy, “Are you crazy?” And this guy now struggles with her. Now he’s going to “break” her. He decided that’s enough. “I’m going to break her now.” He’s going to try to break her. Now the guy is suffering day in and day out. Of course his life is *Gehinom*, because he made his own *Gehinom*! Do you know why? Because he doesn’t want to work. You know what he says to me? “Do other people have to do this?” I said, “Other people have to do other things. In many areas your wife is amazing.” His wife doesn’t demand anything, doesn’t care about money, doesn’t say the word ‘money.’ She doesn’t nag about what you do, what you don’t do. She’s an amazing person. In this area of asking for compliments and affirmation she’s needy, that’s all. I said, “She’s asking you to do *chessed*. You need the *tikun*. You need the correction of doing *chessed*.”

This is what we have to understand. A person has to understand that every one of us has this obligation. You have to accept your responsibilities. Yes, it’s work. It’s hard work. But you should know that every one of us - including every creature in this world - yearns and seeks to fulfill its mission. Everything in the world wants to fulfill its mission, and if it doesn’t, it feels mourning, it feels sad. So, too, every human being seeks to fulfill its mission in this world. Subconsciously, every one of us wants to accomplish something and every one of us wants to accomplish the mission for which we were created.

### CHALLENGING NEIGHBORS

Just last night, a lady called me. She said, “I hate my neighbor.” All day long all she could think about is how her neighbor gets on her *kishkes*. I said, “You know, there are two other neighbors on the block that hated each other. Literally, every day each one called me, saying, ‘Rabbi, you’ve got to get me away from this neighbor.’ I told them, ‘The purpose you came to this world is to make *shalom* between the two of you. You’re both nice people. But each one of you touches on the other’s nerves. If you don’t correct yourself, you’re going to come back in the next life as sisters or maybe husband and wife. Trust me. Take care of it right now!’” Now they’re best friends. A year later, best of friends! It’s beautiful. They really respect each other now.

I told this woman the same thing last night. “You have a tough neighbor. It’s challenging. I understand. But you have to do the job. If not, you know what happens? What do we like to do? Close our door. I’ll ignore my neighbor.” I said to her, “Do you want to, *chas veshalom*, have a difficult child?” Ohhh! I know of a mother who wrote a letter that her child was like a Nazi. She hated her child. She was convinced her child, who was 11 years old, was out to destroy her. An 11 year kid, you understand. “My kid is like a Nazi, provocator, thinking all day long of how to destroy me.” I told the mother, “You need a *refuah sheleimah*.” I sent her to a psychiatrist quickly. I told the father, “I sent her to a psychiatrist because it was a dangerous situation.” “She was very angry at you,” he tells me. I said, “I don’t care. I have to protect your kids.” I felt very terrible for her child. But this was her challenge.

### ELUL: BRIDGING THE GAP AND COMING CLOSER

A person has to know you have to overcome this challenge. Every one of us wants to fulfill his mission and when you fulfill your mission and you overcome it, you will feel *simchah*. If you feel depressed, it’s not because you don’t have a beautiful house and it’s not because you don’t have a multimillion dollar job. Depression comes when a person feels he’s not fulfilling his mission. When a person feels he’s not living up to his potential.

We like to get sidetracked. Many people bury themselves in their work and they hide behind their jobs and ignore the purpose of their life. You have to push and you have to seek to get rid of this depression. The way to get rid of it is by pushing yourself to fulfill the mission that you know inside your *kishkes* you have to do, and you’re avoiding to do it.

Rabbosai, we are now standing on Rosh Chodesh Elul. We are thirty days before Rosh Hashanah. You have to know this is a very unique time period. This is really the point in time most distant from Hashem. The highest point of the year is Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Shemini Atzeres, Simchas Torah. This is the end of the year. It’s the furthest point from Hashem. Right now, many of us feel far away from Hashem. You’ll ask the average person coming out of a summer about the things he’s seen, the things he’s done, the things he’s been involved with, the things he’s been exposed to. Many people don’t feel close to Hashem. They feel a little distant from Hashem. But you have to know that precisely in this time period Hakadosh Baruch Hu presents Himself to us. Hashem makes Himself available at this time. Starting from today, Rosh Chodesh Elul, Hashem presents Himself to every one of us and He says to us, “I’m going to come to you. Are you interested? I’m going to make it easy.”

You see, during the rest of the year, you have to come to Hashem. In Elul, Hashem comes to you. **אני לדודי ודודי לי**. The word Elul stands for those words. *Ani ledodi, ani is Hashem. Ani, Hashem says ledodi, to My beloved, and My beloved is to Me.* Hashem makes the first move to me. Hashem comes to me and He says, “I want to be close to you. I want to bring you back home. I want you to fulfill your mission, get back on track! You know why? Because I’m going to judge you in thirty days and I want you to come out good!”

When you go to a judge and you’re going to come before him, he doesn’t care to convict you or make you innocent. He might be interested in “giving it” to you. Maybe he likes convictions because that’s his politics. But Hashem doesn’t want to convict everybody. Hashem wants to give everybody *brachos, hatzlachos*, children, life, sustenance. Hashem wants to give everybody everything he needs, but you have to be willing to accept it. So Hashem says, “In Elul, I come to you.”

Focus on your mission, Rabbosai. Get refocused during Elul. Let’s start to work on our mission, to undertake, to clarify to ourselves what our mission is. What are your capabilities and talents? Look at your capabilities. Look at what you’re capable of doing. What is your mindset? How do you think about these things? Do you think big? If so, that means you can do big things! You can talk to people. You can open your home to people. You have a kind heart. You can be generous. What are you? Think about what you can do. Do something. Fulfill your mission. And in that *zechus*, you will find happiness and you’ll find *zechiyah bedin* on Rosh Hashanah!