



## BRACHAH COMES WHEN WE LISTEN TO HASHEM

This week's *parshah* is *Parshas Re'eh*, and the beginning of a new *zman*. We're going to study the Gaon of Vilna on the first few *passukim* in *Re'eh* to get some insights into the subject.

Moshe Rabbeinu is talking, and he's says: ראה, "See," אני נותן לפניכם היום, "I am placing before you today, ברכה וקללה, "a blessing and a curse." את הברכה אשר תשמעו, "the blessing that you should obey the commandments" (Devarim 11:26-27). Rashi translates אשר to mean *al manas*, on condition. Rashi says it's a *brachah al manas asher tishmau*.

Now, you have to understand that Moshe Rabbeinu is talking about a specific event. Look in the first Rashi (v. 26). Rashi says there: האמרות בהר גריזים ובהר עיבל, the ones that were said at *Har Grizim* and *Har Eivel*. Does anyone know when the event of *Har Greizim* and *Har Eivel* took place? It took place only after they entered Eretz Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu wasn't there already. Yehoshua ran the event of *Har Greizim* and *Har Eivel*, a famous event where they said *brachos* on one mountain and *klalos* on another mountain. Now Moshe Rabbeinu is talking about that event and he says, "See, I'm placing before you today *brachah* and *klalah*." That means he told them about the event before it took place. And he's saying: את הברכה, You will receive the *brachah*, אשר תשמעו אל מצות ה' אלקיכם, which Rashi says is *al manas*, on the condition that you will listen to Hashem Elokeichem. You'll get the *brachah* on the condition that you are *mekabel* the *mitzvos* אתכם מצוה אנכי היום, that I am being *metzaveh* you today. והקללה אם לא תשמעו אל מצות ה' אלקיכם, And you'll get the *klalah* if you will not listen to the *mitzvos*, וסרתם מן הדרך, and you veer away from the *derech* היום אתכם היום מצוה אנכי, which I have commanded you today, אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום אחרים אלקים אחרים, אשר לא ידעתם, which you did not know.

Let's look at the words of the Vilna Gaon, who makes a number of *diyukim*.<sup>1</sup> He asks what was the message Moshe Rabbeinu was giving Klal Yisrael? He was

ז"ל הגר"א בס' אדרת אליהו פ' ראה, ד"ה נתן: במתנה שהקב"ה מסלק ממנו ואמרו (ברכות ל"ג ע"ב מגילה כ"ה ע"א נידה י"ז ע"ב) הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים. ושמא תאמרו הבחירה ניתן לאדם בימי בחרותו אבל לא אחר שהורגל במעליו הקשים לכן אמר היום בכל יום יום הרשות נתונה והבחירה בידו לילך בדרך טובים. ואמר ברכה וקללה. ולא אמר טוב ורע. כי נמצא צדיק ורע לו רשע וטוב לו. לכן אמר ברכה וקללה. כי הברכה לא תגיע תיכף רק התכלית הוא טוב כמו שמצאנו יעקב בירך את אפרים וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ ולא נתרבו תיכף. ולכן בחלוקת הארץ אמרו בני יוסף אל יהושע מדוע נתת לי נחלה גורל א' וחבל א' ואני עם רב עד אשר עד כה ברכני ה'. ובכל הפקודים לא מצאנו שהיו מספר פקודיו יותר מכל השבטים. ועוד הלא אמר לרב תרבה נחלתו. ורז"ל תרצו משום טפלא (ב"ב קי"ח ע"א) ופי' רש"י דחוק אמנם נראה כי ברכת יעקב היה וידגו לרוב בקרב הארץ על זמן כניסתו לארץ. ובזמן שבעה שנים שכבשו. נתרבו כדגי הים לרוב. לכן אמר עד אשר עד כה ברכני ה'. ביאורו עד אשר נכבשה הארץ. ולפי זה לא נמצאו בפקודיו יותר משארי השבטים כאשר נפקדו במדבר ובערבות מואב כי לא חל ברכת יעקב עד שבאו לארץ וכיון שנכנסו לארץ מכח הברכה נתרבו כדגי הים שאין מספר לתולדותם ומפני זה השיב יהושע עלה לך היערה ובראת לך. ופירשו רז"ל משום טפלא או משום עין הרע כי מי שמע כזאת בפעם אחת ויולדו להם בנים ובנות עד כי חדל לספור. וכן כל הברכות לא נתקיימו מיד. לכן אמר בל' ברכה.

continued on last page

telling them about an event that was going to happen. What was the purpose of that event? When it happens they'll experience the event. It was a type of covenant. They entered this covenant, this *bris* with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. One is on Har Greizim and one is on Har Eivel. I want to tell you *re'eh*, I'm telling you a whole *parshah* called *re'eh* about this event. What's going on over here?

The Gaon also points out that Moshe said: What am I going to show you? I'm going to tell you about *brachah* and *klalah*. Why didn't he say *tov v'ra*, good and bad, or *chaim vemaves*, life and death? Why did he specifically use the term *brachah veklahah*?

## SECHAR AND ONESH ONLY COME IN OLAM HABA

The Gaon of Vilna says as follows: Hakadosh Baruch Hu's message to Klal Yisrael was that there are two *derechim* before them, the *derech hatov* and the *derech hara*, and they should choose which *derech* they want. Everybody is on a pathway of life, every single person is on the road of his own choice. Now, you have to know that *שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא*, there is no reward for a mitzvah in this world (Kiddushin 39b). Hashem said that you don't get *sechar* for *mitzvos* in this world. When you see somebody who seems to be getting *sechar*, if he's a good person, it's probably not *sechar*, just dividends. And when you see a *rasha* getting what seems to be a good life, it's a special exception. Hashem says, "I pay *sechar* to My enemy *leha'avido*, to destroy him." You have to hear this *yesod*. It's a *noradike yesod*. Every time I look at a *rasha* or I read in the paper about a *rasha* who died, and the guy owned a football team, or he owned a basketball team - he was a wealthy guy *bikitzur* - I always remember the *passuk* at the end of *Parshas Vaeschanan* (Devarim 7:10). It says there Hakadosh Baruch Hu pays His enemies in this world in order to destroy them. That's all. Very simple. Very easy job. That's the exception to the rule. The *passuk* says, *ומשלם לשונאיו אל פניו להאבידו*, he pays his enemy in his lifetime to destroy him. The *passuk* continues, *לא יאחר* לא *לשנאיו*, when it comes to His enemy, Hashem does not delay paying up, *אל פניו ישלם*, He pays him up *al hapanim*, on the spot! You have to hear that. You have to get that in your *kishkes* and see that *klor*.

And therefore if you're doing a good job and you're not getting *sechar*, that's a good sign. It's a sign that you're doing a good job. Hashem likes you. You see a *rasha* and he seems to be having a good life, that's because, *בחייו משלם לו גמולו*, during his lifetime he gets good reward, *כדי להאבידו מן העולם הבא*, (Rashi *ibid*).

## SHOWING HASHEM OUR COMMITMENT

Now, if somebody is *zocheh*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives him the ability to earn a *sechar* in *olam haba*. Hashem could make life easier for a person. But sometimes it doesn't go easy, and a person can't understand why it's like that. You say to yourself, "I want to do the right thing, so why is Hashem making it hard for me?" And the answer is for two reasons. Firstly, by making your life easier before you've committed yourself to keeping Torah and mitzvos and proving your mettle, you diminish your *sechar*. Only once you are fully committed to Torah and mitzvos, can you still receive your *sechar* even if it's easy. Secondly, when a person makes the first step, Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes it rough for him because He wants him to earn his *sechar* for his commitment. If you knew that if you learned Torah all your needs would be taken care of, what kind of commitment to learning Torah would that be? You wouldn't get any *sechar*, because *sechar*

is determined based on the *tza'ar*, לפום צערא אגרא, according to the labor is the reward (Pirkei Avos 5:23). You only get *sechar* based on the *tza'ar*. That's the formula. Let's say a guy commits himself to learning even if it's difficult and he does it. So now Hashem knows he's committed.

The Gaon says that the *ikar onesh* for *aveiros*, the *ikar tashlum* for *aveiros*, is in *Gehinom*. He doesn't say there's no *onesh* for *aveiros* in this world.

## SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T APPEAR SUCCESSFUL MAY STILL BE BLESSED

Therefore, the Gaon explains, Moshe used the terms *brachah* and *klalah*. You know what "*brachah*" means? You'll be blessed. Blessed means, for example, that they bless you to have good children or to have wealth. Now even if a guy has good children or wealth, does that mean he's going to see the goodness of those children or enjoy that wealth in this world? Not necessarily. It's a *brachah*. *Brachah* means it's a potential. It's a source. That's what *brachah* is. That's why a person who has a *brachah* in this world will benefit from that *brachah*, but he will only harvest the produce of that *brachah* in the next world. The pleasure that people get out of good children in this world, is not necessarily the *sechar* of having good children. The *sechar* of good children will mainly be recognized in the next world.

That's why Moshe Rabbeinu chose the words *brachah* and *klalah*, because a person doesn't necessarily see the *tov* and *ra* immediately. *Tov v'ra* refers to the future, the receiving of the end result.

We are foolish because we think: "If I had money, I'd be fine, or, if I have \$100,000 in my pocket, I feel like I'm a *muchzak* on it, I am in possession of it. It's mine." But because I have the *brachah* today, because I have good kids today, doesn't mean I'm going to see *nachas* from them in the future.

*Tov v'ra* is the end result. *Brachah* and *klalah* is the initial *garin*, the seed for the potential. That's what *brachah veklalah* are.

Moshe Rabbeinu gave them an overview of how to view *brachah* and *klalah*. If you see a *talmid chacham* today and you don't see the guy looking successful, it could be that today this guy is a *gebentched mentch*. He's a blessed person! He's a very blessed person. He hasn't seen the *tov* yet. He'll see the *tov* later on. But it doesn't mean to say he lacks the *brachah*.

I'll tell you where I see this very often. You'll go to most *yeshivaleit*, most of whom are truly blessed. You'll find that they have much less money than most other people out there. Yet most of them are reasonably happy, satisfied and don't think they have it that bad. And the opposite is also true. You go into the world, the working world, and you often see that people are struggling. No matter what they have, most people don't think they have enough. You talk to a guy for a few minutes. You know how the conversation goes? "*Parnasah* could be better." That's what the average guy tells you.

## EVERY PERSON HAS FREE CHOICE

Now why does it say the word *nosen* - אנכי נותן לפניכם? *Nosen* means to "give" in the present tense (see Kol Eliyahu, footnote #1). What does "I am giving you

a present” mean? If you choose to be *mekabel*, to do *mitzvos*, Hashem gives you *brachah*. It’s totally in your hands: הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים. It means you’ve chosen a *brachah*. If you don’t do *kabalas mitzvos*, you’ve chosen a *klalah*. Now what is the idea of נתן, I am “giving” you? What is the idea from the word “giving”? The word “giving” is used for a gift, but the concept behind “giving” is that it’s a gift in the present time. It’s a gift right now. Now, we usually say “I’m going to give you a gift,” or “I gave you a gift.” Usually it’s not “I’m giving you a gift right now, in the present moment.” So, generally speaking, if I say, “I’m giving you a gift” it means to say, “I’m going to give you a gift in the future.” So the question is: what does נתן אגבי mean (ibid)? I am “giving you a gift”? Here it sounds like it’s in the present tense.

The Vilna Gaon says it’s because there’s a *hava mina* that people would think their free will would be affected. If a person only had a choice at the beginning of his life to choose good or bad and he chose bad, he’d basically be stuck. Even if afterwards he wanted to change, it would be too late. If you ask most people who have made wrong choices in life what they think their chances of changing their lives are, they’ll tell you: very little. I’ve seen many a bum who were told by people that they could change, and you know what they said to me? “I can’t change. Maybe I could have changed. I made the wrong choices. It’s a little too late and a little too little.” That’s the mistake, says the Gaon.

The Vilna Gaon says, Moshe Rabbeinu is telling Klal Yisrael: “Hakadosh Baruch Hu is saying you have a choice *kol yamecha*, all your days of your life until you stop breathing, until the *yom hamisah*. You have a *takanah*, you have an option. You are not stuck. Today is a new day. The gift of choosing what to do is yours for the taking. It’s in a *matzav* of *present* tense regardless of what yesterday was.”

## PAST CHOICES DON’T INFLUENCE OUR CURRENT ONES

So what’s the counter? A person is going to say, “Okay, so I’m going to choose to do good from now. But *lema’aseh*, I’ve got a boatload of *aveiros*. I accumulated lots of baggage. I have no *takanah* from that baggage.” The answer is: the *pasuk* says *hayom*. What is the concept of *hayom*? *Hayom* means: I’m placing before you *hayom*, which means “this day.” The Vilna Gaon says you have to know, understand, and believe what it says in the gemara about *teshuvah*: When a person does *teshuvah*, it’s like קטן שנולד דמי, he’s like a child that is just born. A child that’s just born also had an existence before he was born. He’s been around for a while but it was a totally different atmosphere. That was in the womb. He was then a sea animal. Now he has become a dry land animal.

You have to know that the first thing to tell yourself is: I’m starting over from *hayom*. Today! I’m a new person today.

## HASHEM ALLOWS US TO FREELY CHOOSE TO DO GOOD

Ah, then the question is: “Okay, what am I going to do with my *yetzer hara*?” Like it says in *Chazal*, if a person did an *aveirah*, he should be pained simply because he did an *aveirah*. But you know what the greater pain is? That he opened up a *pesach*. He got involved with the mafia! They say an amazing thing about the mafia. If you don’t bother them, they don’t bother you. But if you borrow money from them, even \$10, then once you borrow, you open an account with them, and then you’re finished. Now they own you. They come to you to pay them for

protecting you. They're never finished with you. So Hashem says to the person who involved himself with the *yetzer*, אנכי נותן לפניכם היום. You know what *anochi* reminds us of? אנכי ה' אלקיך. Do you know what אנכי ה' אלקיך means? "I am Hashem. I am the only One that can save you. Just like I took you out of Mitzrayim." *Anochi* Who took you out of Mitzrayim. You couldn't get out of Mitzrayim. You were so locked up in Mitzrayim. You were on the 49<sup>th</sup> level of *tumah*. I took you out of there. ראה אנכי נותן, Who is giving you this *matanah*. Do you know who is giving you this *breirah* every day? Do you know who is waiting until the day you die? You know who is making you a קטן שנוולד דמי? It's *Anochi* - Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Hashem is saying אנכי אהיה עמך, I am going to be with you. Don't be afraid of the *yetzer hara*. Like it says, יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום והקב"ה עוזרו, Hakadosh Baruch Hu assists him.

Then the Gaon presents a *mashal* where, let's say a guy goes and buys some goods from his friend and the guy is trying to push the sale on him. So what does the buyer think? Why is this guy trying to unload something valuable? If somebody is offering you something and pushing it on you, usually there's a problem with it. Usually, a guy with something good and valuable doesn't want to sell so easily, and the buyer has to convince the seller to sell it. The Gaon says: A guy might think there must be something wrong with this *mekach* that Hashem is selling me because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is trying to influence me with all types of appeasements and all kinds of things to get me to buy what He's selling. So, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says: I'm placing it *lefneichem*. You know what "*lefneichem*" means? I'm not forcing you. I didn't say "*lachem*." I said "*lefneichem*." You hear what it says in the *passuk*? If it would say הנה אנכי נותן לכם it would mean: I'm giving to you. That means I'm stuffing this gift down your throat. By saying "*lefneichem*," I'm saying that I'm placing it "before you." You know what "before you" means? "Here it is. Do you want it? You've got to reach out and take it." If it would say "*lachem*," it would mean, "I'm giving it to you. I'm putting it in your hand. Here it is." Instead, Hashem said, "I'm putting it *lefneichem*."

Then the *tachbulah* of the *yetzer hara* comes and says: "Okay. Very nice. If the whole world is *tzaddikim*, then I can become a *tzaddik* also. Everybody is *frum*, I'll become *frum*. Everybody is sitting and learning, I'll start sitting and learning. But what if I'm going to be the only guy doing it?!"

The Vilna Gaon says: Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, *re'eh*, see. It doesn't say *re'u*. *Re'u* is plural. *Re'eh* is singular. Do you know why it says *re'eh*? When you're making choices for your life, you must be an individualist. You have to be someone who thinks for himself. Don't look at the rest of the world to see if they're *tzaddikim* or *reshaim*. When you make choices for yourself, choose as an individual. Every life choice you're going to make, you have to make as a *yachid*. Not as part of a group. Not because he's *frum*, therefore I'm also going to be *frum*.

In conclusion, here is a synopsis. *Anochi* means even if you're stuck with the *yetzer hara*, *anochi*, remember that I, Hashem, took you out of Mitzrayim. I'm going to take you and I'm going to be with you. Don't fear the *yetzer hara*. It's overpowering, but I don't care how strong it is. *Anochi*, I, Hashem, made him. That's My guarantee.

*Nosen*, its constant, a continuous choice, in the present tense. What about forcing you to take it? There is no forcing. It's *lefneichem*. You've got to take this gift as an opportunity.

## AN EXAMPLE OF HAVING TO MAKE A CHOICE

Not long ago, we had a young man who came here *bederech nes*. This guy was always dreaming of going to a *beis medrash*. For some reason, the *yetzer hara* got involved with him and he didn't go. So what happened? Hakadosh Baruch Hu orchestrated that the fellow should end up here. He told me that he had told Hashem that if he could find a place with every one of the many conditions he was looking for, then he'd come. He said he found that here, so he came. He stayed here for a few days. It was unbelievable. Then he said he was leaving for a bit, but he promised he's coming back. You know what I told him? "You're not coming back." He replied, "No, no, I really am. Rabbi, I really am. I'm coming back." I told him, "You know why you are not coming back? Because Hashem always places the choice *lefneichem*. You have to take the opportunity."

I called him up last Thursday night. I sensed that something was wrong. I said, "My friend, you're backing out." He said, "No. Rabbi, didn't I tell you? I'm not backing out. I'm thinking about it."

I said to the fellow, "Do you understand that you're in a very big predicament here. You promised me this was your dream." One of his biggest initial impediments he had was that his parents were very anti. But when he came here that week, his father called me and said, "I want my son to learn in *yeshivah*." He told the kid, "I want you to get a *rebbe*. You need a *rebbe*." It was unbelievable, not *stam*. Hashem took away from him every *me'akev*, every impediment, and yet, he couldn't make up his mind.

The bottom line is: you have to make a choice. Hashem always puts it *lefneichem*. He never pushes it down your throat. Hashem sets it before you. That's what *lefneichem* means. It's set before you and you have to reach out and take it. It's very sad what happened to him.

Then that young man tells me he's involved with a *gevaldike shidduch*. The girl wants somebody who is sitting and learning. So he told her, "I'm going to sit and learn." I told him, "But I thought you changed your mind about learning?!" He said, "We'll see how the shidduch goes. We'll see. I want to sit and learn - no *shaila* about it."

A *mentsch* has to know and remember: *hayom*. *Hayom* means don't be afraid from baggage because you're *שנולד דמי* *ckktsn*.

What is the *klalah*? Literally, a curse means deficiency. That's what it is. A person who is cursed means he lacks something basic, so he's a 'cursed' fellow. That's what we call the person. If the guy says something should happen to you, it means I want your health to become diminished or your wealth to become diminished or whatever it is. *Klalah* comes from *chisaron*.

Now the Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (פרק ה הלכה א-ב) writes about this *halacha* as follows: רשות כל אדם נתונה לו, Hashem places the option before every single individual, אם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך טובה, if he wants to turn to *derech tovah*, a good *derech*, ולהיות צדיק הרשות בידו, then the door is open. ואם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך רעה, And if he wants to turn to *derech ra'ah*, ולהיות רשע הרשות בידו, the *reshus* is in his hands. And he says, don't allow the thought to enter your mind which *tipshei umos haolam*, foolish *goyim* ישראל, and *golamim*, most idiots who are Jewish, and maintain the same opinion, say: שהקב"ה גוזר על האדם, that



Hashem decrees upon a man, מתחילת בריאתו, from the beginning of his creation, to be a *tzaddik* or a *rasha*. אין הדבר כן, it's not so. The Rambam (הלכה ג), continues: והוא עמוד התורה, ועיקר זה עיקר גדול הוא, and this is a foundation of the Torah and mitzvos. And what's the source? He brings two *pessukim*. שנאמר ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים, as it says, "See, I am placing before you today life, etc." That's in *Parshas Nitzavim* where it says ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע, "See, I set before you this day life and goodness, death and evil" (Devarim 30:15). And the second *passuk* says: ראה - אני נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה, the *passuk* in this week's *parshah* (ibid). כלומר, which means to say, שהרשות בידכם, the *reshus* is within your hands, וכל שיחפץ האדם, ממעשה בני אדם, whether good or bad, is up to him. That's it. That doesn't mean you shouldn't *daven* to Hashem. That doesn't mean you shouldn't reach out to Hashem. A *mentsch* has to know this is a very important principle a person must always remember.

## TESHUVAH FOR IMPROPER VIEWPOINTS

Now the Rambam says in another *halachah* that when a person does *teshuvah*, he has to do *teshuvah* not only from his sins. He had to do *teshuvah* also from his negative *hashkofos*. His philosophies, his *deos raos*. The Rambam says (פרק ג הלכה ז) as follows: אל תאמר שאין תשובה אלא מעבירות שיש בהן מעשה, you shouldn't say that the one only needs to do *teshuva* for *aveiros*, which involve action. I want everybody to look up these Rambams later on. This is a very important Rambam. He says, כשם שצריך אדם לשוב מאלו, just like a person needs to do *teshuvah* for immorality, *gezel*, *geneivah*, thievery, robbery, כך הוא צריך, כגון זנות, לחפש בדעות רעות, similarly, one needs to search his wrong, bad perspectives, שיש, that he has, ולשוב מהם, and do *teshuvah* for them. He has to do *teshuvah* for all kinds of things, whether that means for getting upset, or having animosity, jealousy, competitiveness, lightheadedness, pursuing money, pursuing honor, pursuing food, or pursuing pleasures. מן הכל צריך לחזור בתשובה, a person has to do *teshuvah* for all things. ואילו העונות, these sins are much more serious and more difficult than those sins that involve a *ma'aseh* because when a person is sunk into pursuing money, *kavod*, and pleasures, קשה הוא לפרוש, it's very difficult for him to get out of them. That's called רשע דרכו יעזב, "Let the wicked give up their ways" (Isaiah 55:7).

Now, in the next *halachah* (פרק ז הלכה ד), after the Rambam says this, he says a strange thing. He says as follows: A person shouldn't imagine that a *ba'al teshuvah* is much more distant from Hashem than a *tzaddik* because of all the baggage that he has, all the *aveiros* that he did and accumulated. He says it's not so. But rather he says he is *ahuv*, he is beloved and *nechmad*, לפני הבורא, אלא, ואלא עוד, וכאילו לא חטא מעולם, Hashem is going to give him a lot of *sechar*. Do you know why? שהרי ופרש ממנו, טעם החטא, and he conquered his *yetzer hara*. That's what a *mentsch* has to know.

The Rambam is telling us an interesting thing here. *Teshuvah* is something you have to do not only for *ma'asim* but even from perspectives, *hashkofos*.

Here is a fellow who calls me up. He tells me that his wife honestly does not mean to criticize him or be critical of him whatsoever. But whatever comes out of her mouth, he takes as criticism. He's very upset. Unbelievable. I told the guy that if his wife doesn't know she's critical, what should you do? If she knows

she's critical, she would go to a therapist and they could work on not being critical. But if she says, "Good morning," and you decide that's critical, and she says she's being polite and not critical, so who has to fix himself? Not your wife. You have to fix yourself. It's very hard for a person to do that. A person has to fix himself up.

Then he says, this is *mamash* what he says. "I don't think I can change my thinking processes. I can't change my thinking processes." No, you *can* change your thinking process! And don't think, says the Rambam, that you're gone. You're not gone. This is *mamash* what the Vilna Gaon is telling us, too.

## THE MESSAGE FOR THE UPCOMING CHODESH ELUL

This is the message that Moshe Rabbeinu told us *re'eh* and this message always comes on the eve of Rosh Chodesh Elul. You always get this message every year on the eve of Rosh Chodesh Elul. You've gone through the last eleven months. Now it's the last month of the year. There's what to be salvaged and there's what you can salvage. There is a lot to save. And it's *hayom*. You have to know it's not *pashut*. There's a concept of *יום בשנה חשובים שנה*, thirty days in the year is a year. There's a concept of a week being considered a year. There is a concept of even a day being a year. Of course, a year comprising 365 full days, that's the best year! But if it's a thirty-day year, a seven-day year, a day-year - everything has in it a different aspect of a year.

Let us be *mechazek* ourselves to prepare ourselves for the beginning of the *zman*. This *zman* we should keep these focuses in mind. This is a powerful Vilna Gaon that everybody should study. It's a synopsis. Remember the messages: *Re'eh, anochi, nosen*. Do you know why? Because in your life every one of you is going to have an opportunity to speak and of course everybody could say these things, but now we want to get a perspective.

Maybe you'll tell somebody, do you know why Moshe Rabbeinu told us an amazing *shmooze* on one of the final days of his life? Moshe Rabbeinu prepared Klal Yisrael how to counter every *ta'annah* that the *yetzer hara* would bring. This is a *ta'annah* that everybody has. People say, "Rabbi, I want to do this." Okay, so that is asking for *klalah*. A *bachur* tells me he wants to chill out. *Klalah*. The *teretz* is he tells me, "I don't feel the *klalah* right now." I say, "Okay. You're like the guy who lost his job and doesn't know that he's never going to get a job anywhere else in his life. But he thinks he has a few dollars in the bank, so right now he says, 'Okay. I lost my job but I'm not cursed yet.' Oh no, no no. You're cursed my friend. The *ra* you don't have yet. The *ra* you haven't tasted. But the *klalah*, that you have."

Let's remember these important lessons and apply them in our lives and especially during the upcoming Chodesh Elul. Have a wonderful Shabbos.

וז"ל הגר"א בס' קול איליהו: ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה, הנה מה שאמר נותן ולא אמר נתתי יבואר דאם אמר נתתי הו"א שהבחירה הניתנה לאדם לילך בדרך טוב הוא דוקא בתחלת הבחירה, אבל אם בירר לו דרך הרע אין לו תקנה אף אם בירר לו אח"כ דרך הטוב לכך אמר הכותב נותן והוא לשון הווה פי' שאמר הקב"ה שכל ימך עד תשלום ימין יש לך ברירה לבחור בדרך הטוב אפילו עד יום המיתה, ואם אמר יאמר האדם מה תקנה יש לי אם הייתי רשע עד הנה, מה אעשה עם העבירות שעשיתי ואין לי תקנה, לכן אמר הכותב היום שהבעל תשובה הוא כקטן שנולד רק שיעשה אח"כ תשובה וילך בדרך הטוב מכאן ולהבא, ואם עוד אמר יאמר האדם מה אעשה עם היצ"ר שכופה אותי, לכן אמר הכותב אנכי פי' אנכי אהי' עמך ואל תירא מן היצר כמאמר חז"ל יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום והקב"ה עוזרו, ואם עוד אמר יאמר האדם אולי לו טוב הוא הדרך שמרצה אותי בכל מיני רצוים כדרך המוכרים סחורה שמרצים להלווקהים בכל מיני תחבולות אם יש להם סחורה גרועה, לכן אמר הכותב לפניכם פי' הדבר הזה הוא לפניכם אין אני מכריח אתכם, לכן לא אמר לכם רק לפניכם, ואילו עוד אמר יאמר האדם דזהו כשיש בעולם צדיקים אבל מהו אם אני לבד אברור לי דרך הטוב מה אני, לכך אמר הכותב ראה בלשון יחיד ולא אמר ראו בלשון רבים אלא ר"ל ראה לפניך ואל תשיגח על העולם



## IN SUMMARY

In one of his final addresses to Klal Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu prepared them to be able to face every *ta'annah* that the *yetzer hara* could bring to cause a person to stumble and sin. The message is neatly coded in three words - *Re'eh*, *anochi*, and, *nosen lefneichem*. **Re'eh:** We each have to make an individual, continuous attempt to choose good. We have to continuously redirect ourselves toward good by reminding ourselves that *bracha* is the result of us listening to Hashem. **Anochi:** If the challenge seems insurmountable, we should remember that Hashem is on our case. He encourages us by saying, "I took you out of Mitzrayim and I will help you overcome the *yetzer hara*." Another way that Hashem encourages us to choose right is that we should never fear the spiritual baggage we carry from our past deeds. If a person fails, there is always new hope - daily - to choose to do better since daily, each of us is like a newborn child. **Nosen:** We must choose to do good in order to earn the major part of our *sechar* in *olam haba*. **Lefneichem:** while Hashem can lay the opportunity to do good in front of us, we must positively act and do good. Reiterating the importance of free choice, Hashem told Moshe to remind Klal Yisrael of the *brachah* and *klalah* that will indicate where we are headed - there is potential blessing or curse that is the fruit of our choices. The main *sechar* or *onesh* is not in this world. This enables us to have free choice, the opportunity of the two *derachim* that stretch out before every one of us. As a gift from Hashem, a person can get more *brachah* in their life. How? By not limiting their commitment to trying to grow. A person should try to grow and see how Hashem offers a test, which if they pass it, earns a person Hashem's helping hand and brings a lot of *brachah* into a person's life.