



YEARNING FOR REAL CHANGE AND CHIYUS

BETTER DAYS FOR TESHUVAH

The time period of the year that we now find ourselves is the most unique period of the entire year. There are no other days remotely like this. We'll start with some words from the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 2:6) who writes the following: *אף על פי*, even though, *teshuvah* and *davening* are always *yafeh* (nice)...Now, let us pause for a moment and study those words. The Rambam says that *teshuvah* and *davening*, both *teshuvah* and crying out to Hashem, are *yafeh* all year long. What does that mean that it's *yafeh*? What does that mean, it's nice?¹

The meaning of that is, that any time of the year, no matter who you are, no matter what you are, no matter when you are, if you call out to Hashem, if you do *teshuvah* or you pray to Hashem, that *teshuvah* and that *tefilah* will make some impression. I'm not telling you it's going to wipe away any decrees you have on yourself, but it's going to leave an indelible impression.

But the Rambam continues and says, *בעשרה ימים*, in the ten days that begin with Rosh Hashanah and end with Yom Hakippurim יותר *יפה*. Do you know what that means? It's very nice. It's very good. Now we have to understand: what does it mean? What's the difference between 'good' and 'very good'? And the Rambam adds, *ומתקבלת היא מיד*, it's accepted immediately. Now that's an offer like you never hear. People go to big rabbis and they ask, "How long does it take for his blessings to work?" People travel to Uman. Thousands, tens of thousands of people go there every year. They heard that if you go to Uman and you exert yourself there, and you pray, then when it comes time to go to Gehinom, somebody is going to pull you out by your *peyos*. They say, you've got to make sure you have *peyos*. Without *peyos* they're not going to pull you out by your ears. Whether it's going to happen or not, I don't know, but the Rambam tells us that *teshuvah* in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* it's *מתקבלת היא מיד*, it's immediately accepted. *שנאמר*, as it says in the *passuk* (Isaiah 55:6): *דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראוהו בהיותו קרוב*.

The same *teshuvah* and the same *tefilah* that you do all year long which works to a certain extent has a completely different *koach* during this time of the year. And not only that, it's accepted by Hashem immediately. Do you know why? Because for some reason, which I'm not complaining about, Hakadosh Baruch Hu made Himself available during this time. He's all ears. He's listening. He wants to hear His children come to Him and talk to Him, to get close to Him. Usually, for *tefilah* to be accepted, there are many conditions that have to be present, but now, Hashem accepts them immediately.²

So what is the difference between this time of the year and the rest of the year? Why all year is it *yafeh* and now it's *yafeh beyoser*?

The *gemara* says in *Rosh Hashanah* (16a) that *יפה צעקה לאדם*, it's always good for a person to cry out to Hashem to save him *בין קודם* *דין*, whether it's before the decree came down from Hashem, *ובין לאחר גזר דין*, whether it's after the decree went out. It always works. Rabeinu Nissim, a big commentator on the *gemara*, one of the *rishonim*, says that all year long, it's not *muvtach*, it's not certain that a person will be answered.³ You can pray to Hashem. There's no *havtachah* that it will be able to tear up the *gezar din*. But you know what it will do? He says it's *yafeh*, it definitely has an effect, *umo'ilah*, it helps to minimize the suffering. To minimize the *paraniyos*. That's what it helps. Other *rishonim* say the same thing. But in the ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, if a person *davens* even after the *gezar din*, Hashem will tear up the decree.

Now, that is an awesome, unbelievable opportunity. The Gaon of Vilna, in his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*, writes that even a *rasha gamur*, an absolute *rasha*, who had his *gezar din* on Rosh Hashanah - he was signed and was sealed for death - he could tear up his *gezar din* in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* if he does *teshuvah*.

This is a very special time for *teshuvah*. Rabeinu Yonah, who wrote the *Sha'arei Teshuvah* (2:14), writes that this time of the year is an *eis ratzon*. An *eis ratzon* is the dream time to pray. He says *והתפילה נשמעת בו*, *tefilah* is heard in these days.⁴

I'm sure all of us, even on our small *madreigah*, have a desire to be helped by Hashem. Whenever a rabbi comes to town, people go to him. You have people that travel to Eretz Yisrael to pray at the *kevarim*, to pray at Kever Rochel, to pray in Meiron, to *daven* by the Kosel. Why are they *davening* there? Because they heard that in that place, prayers are accepted more easily. So they go nuts. They spend fortunes of money and they stop their lives and they go to this place and that place. What's the *pshat*? We have this right in

¹ אף על פי שהתשובה והצעקה יפה לעולם. בעשרה הימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכפורים היא יפה ביותר ומתקבלת היא מיד שנאמר (ישעיה נה ו) «דרשו ה' בהמצאו». במה דברים אמורים ביחוד אבל צבור כל זמן שעושים תשובה וצווקין בלב שלם הם נעניין שנאמר (דברים ז) «כה אלהינו בכל קראנו אליו».

² כתוב בס' בני עולם (ר' דוד אברהמי): «זוה לשון ספר דברי' הושע (מ"ב פרק ט) לענין תפלה על הצלחת למויד: דע בשמתפלל האדם אל השי"ת שיצילו מיצר הרע ויזכהו לעשות רצונו יתעלה תמיד, תפלה כזאת היא חשובה מאד ומועלת. וטוב לו שיקדים ששה תנאים ועל ידי זה תהיה התועלת היוצאת מן התפלה גדולה מאד בעזה"ת. א, יבש יכלם על עונותיו ויפטר מעוונותיו. ב, יכא לבבו על אשר קצרה ידו מהושיע את עצמו מיד יצרו, וקשה לו לעמוד כנגדו, כי הבכי הוא תועלת גדול להשיג סיוע מהשי"ת אל התשובה. ה, לא יסמך לבו על תפלתו, ומחמת זה יתגשלו עליו בעבודתו לבל יעשה בה אף כפי יקלתו. ו, יותר רצוי שיצמצם זמן תפלתו יותר רצויה להתקבל, עכ"ל. ואין לו לעכב תפלתו עד שיצדמו לו כל התנאים הנ"ל. אלא יתפלל בכל זמן שצורך והקב"ה שומע תפלה בכל עת, אלא שיש לו לנצל את התנאים הנ"ל באופן מיוחד.»

³ ור' יצחק אמר יפה צעקה לאדם. דאפילו היכא דלא מקרע גזר דין ממעט את הפורענות (ר"ן על ראש השנה ד' ב"י).
⁴ וראוי לכל ירא אלהים למעט בעסקיו להיות רעיוניו נחתים. ולקבע ביום ובלילה עתים להתבודד בדרכיו ולחפש דרכיו ולחלקו. ולקדם אשמורות ולהתעסק בדרכי התשובה וכשרון המעשה. ולשפך שיח ולשאת תפלה ורנה. ולהפיל תחנה. והעת עת רצון והתפלה נשמעת בו כענין שנאמר (ישעיה מ"ט:ח) בעת רצון עניתך ויום ישועה צרתך. ואמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (ר"ה יח) דרשו ה' בהמצאו אלו עשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכפורים. ומצות עשה מן התורה להעיר אדם את רוחו לחזור בתשובה ביום הכפורים שנאמר (ויקרא ט"ז:ל) מכל חטאתיכם לפני ה' תטהרו. על כן הזהירונו הכתוב שנטהר לפני ה' בתשובתו והוא יכפר בימים הלכה לטהר איתנו.

front of us! We're sitting on a gold mine! We don't have to go anywhere right now. All we have to do is open up our mouths and talk to Hashem and make requests. That's what you have to do. Hashem didn't tell us to make a trip to Israel. Hashem says, "Stay right where you are. I'm going to come to you. We're going to give you door to door service." Hashem says, "I am going to present Myself to you, and you should seize the opportunity."

So first you have to think about how great this opportunity is. Now, I'm very happy that we're not holding by the last day of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* because then it would be a little late. We're holding in the middle of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and everybody can seize this opportunity and avail himself of it. But you have to do it with *seichel*.

YOU DON'T NEED THE LOTTERY

Most people who do it, the first thing they ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu for is money. After they ask for money they say, "Hashem, give me more money." Then, when they finish with asking for more money they say, "Hashem, could I win the big sweepstakes? Could I really win the big prize?" I can't tell you how many calls I received when the lottery was holding by one billion dollars. I could tell where the lottery was holding by how many calls I got. "Rabbi, could you teach me how to have the *bitachon*?" I said, "If I knew how to have the *bitachon* I would do it for myself and I wouldn't give it to you." Then I said, "But you don't want to win it. Trust me. If you win the big prize, it will be the end of your life. If you call me up that you want to win \$100,000, \$500,000, nu. Then we'll talk." I know somebody in Cleveland, a nice *frum* girl who won a couple of million dollars. She moved out of town - within the next month. She bought her parents a nice home somewhere in Lakewood. She moved in there with them. She's trying to live incognito.

The Chafetz Chaim told people he had a dream one night that he won the big lottery in Europe. And the next morning, instead of waking up and giving his wife the good news, he told her, "I had a terrible dream and I want to make *hatavas chalom*." His wife said, "What happened? What did you dream?" He said, "I dreamed that we won the lottery." She said, "Isn't that a good thing?" He said, "It's a terrible thing. Hashem would be paying me up in this world. It's not going to bring us *brachah*."

You should *daven* to Hashem that Hashem should provide you with everything you need, at any time that you need. That's a much bigger *brachah*. You shouldn't have any worries. You should be able to marry your children off, to pay your bills, to enjoy your life. All this money is not going to help you.

HASHEM COMES CLOSER AT THIS TIME

So we have to understand that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is closer to us during these days. The Ramchal, the author of *Mesillas Yesharim*, writes an interesting *meshal* in his sefer *Derech Hashem*. He says all year long a person's relationship with Hashem is like a person's relationship with the sun. The sun is always out. But many times, if you're in your house you don't have sun. And if you close the curtains, you surely don't have sun in your house. And if it's a cloudy day, you also don't have so much sun in your life. He says, a person all year long has to know his relationship with Hashem is like his relationship with the sun. That means there are curtains. There are clouds. It's dark. The *sefarim* say that if you are not on a big *madreigah*, talking to Hashem all year long is like talking to another person in a dark room. Did you ever try to communicate with a person in a dark room? It's not so comfortable. "Hello? You hear me? Are you there? Do you see me? Do you feel me?" But in these days of *Aseres Hayamim*, it's like the lights went on and Hashem pulled back all the curtains! You don't change. Hashem changes. Hashem removes all the *ikuvim*. And Hashem says an amazing thing: "If you call out to Me, I will accept your *tefilah*."

Now you have to realize that all year long, קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו, "Hashem is close to anybody who calls out to Him," as it says in *Ashrei* (Tehillim 145:18). But there's a condition. What's the condition? לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, "to all who call Him with sincerity." Now, do you know how hard it is to talk to Hashem *be'emes*? It's difficult. A human being is a very complex machine and his complexities make it harder for him to talk with *emes*. People have all kinds of ideas, all kinds of objectives, all kinds of thoughts. But in *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, there are no objectives. What you do is, you call out to Hashem and you talk to Him. And it's *yafeh meod*, it's very good. And Hashem listens to you and Hashem will accept that *tefilah miyad* and even if you have something that you're suffering from, you have to know you can break that *gezar din*.

A GOOD TIME FOR TEFILLAH

My rebbi (HaRav Meir Halevi Soloveichik) told me a story that somebody once came to his father, the Brisker Rav, and said to the Brisker Rav, "I need you to *daven* for my wife. She has issues right now and the doctors say it doesn't look good and they want to make tests." The Brisker Rav told him, "Not now! Not now! No tests now. Don't do anything now. Rosh Hashanah is in a few days. Wait until after Yom Kippur because what you're going to avail yourself and you're going to have access to in these ten days will be something you never had since you got the challenge, and it could change drastically, completely." And that's what happened. The person understood what he was facing and he went home and prayed to Hashem from the depths of his heart. And he said to Hashem, "Change any negative *gezeirah*. And then his wife went back to the doctor, and *baruch Hashem*, she was all right.

So the fact that you were sick until now doesn't mean anything. Or, the fact that you were poor until now doesn't mean anything.

I know of stories where people were facing trouble from the government and (when they asked a Rav for a *brachah*) they were told, "Wait until after Yom Kippur. Right now talk to Hashem. Do *teshuvah*." A person who does *teshuvah* and truly attempts to change himself can break that *gezar din*. (Now, you can't take advantage of Hashem. You can't tell Hashem, "Do me a favor. Cut me some slack. I want to continue my lifestyle"). But the *chiddush* is, you don't have to clean up your life first. That's an amazing *chiddush*! You don't have to clean up your life first. Usually you tell a guy, "First change, show me your good intentions."

I'm dealing right now with a few marriages where one of the spouses is not behaving properly and the other spouse is saying they want to dissolve the marriage. The other side is saying, "Can't you give me a chance? Can't you give me a chance?" I spoke to these people. I said, "Why don't you give them a chance?" They said, "I'm willing to give them a chance. Let them change first and then I'll give them a chance. They want me to take them back and then they'll change. It doesn't work like that."

With Hashem, though, it works like that, rabbosai. With Hashem, during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* that *mechalech* works. You should be sincere, and you could buy yourself tremendous *zechus* like you can't imagine.

CHAP AREIN MITZVOS

Now, any *mitzvah* you do during these days is extremely valuable, so it's important to accrue *mitzvos*. You should come up with ideas of how to do *mitzvos*, all day long. I'm going to give you an example. There was once a big *tzaddik* in Bnei Brak who was one of the biggest *poskim* in the world. His name was Rav Shmuel Vosner (2013-2015). Rav Shmuel Vosner once was telling a group of his *talmidim*, "You know, you have to *chap arein mitzvos*?" So they said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You know a person can't learn all day long. It's not possible. You have to do other things. You are occupied." He said, "You know there are *sheish mitzvos temidiyos*, there are six constant *mitzvos* that every person could do."⁵ So they said, "Do you do that?" Listen to what he told them. He said, "At least a hundred times a day." Could you imagine that? At least one hundred times a day! And he was a man that was a Torah machine. He was answering *shaylos* from all over the world, he was busy learning, teaching, and running a *yeshivah*. More than one hundred times a day, for every moment that he had, he was *chapping arein*. Simple *mitzvos* that anybody can do.

Somebody once came to Rav Yisrael Salanter (1810-1883) and said, "I'm so busy with my work. I have no time to learn." He said, "You have no time to learn? What do you do when you wake up in the morning?" He said, "I wash my hands." He said, "Then what do you do?" "Then I say *modeh ani*." "What do you do then?" "Go to the washroom." "What do you do then?" "I wash my face." "What do you do then?" "I go to pray." "What do you do there in *shul*?" "Put on my *tefillin*, my *tallis*." "Ah!" He told him, "you just learned Torah." He said, "You know what? You just quoted what it says in *Shulchan Aruch*. That's what it says in *Shulchan Aruch*. You should wake up in the morning, wash your hands, go to the washroom, wash your face, put your shoes on, right shoe first, left shoe second. Tie your left shoe first. If you're doing it, and you're thinking this is the *halachah* and I'm fulfilling the *Shulchan Aruch*, you're getting a *mitzvah* of *talmud Torah* right there. Not only are you performing what it says in the Torah, you're also learning the Torah." That's a tremendous opportunity for a person to *chap arein*.

I want to share with you a major *chiddush* from the Alshich Hakadosh (1508-1593). Rabeinu Moshe Alshich lived at the time as the Arizal (1534-1572), and the Beis Yosef (1488-1575). He was part of the inner circle. He was from the holiest of the holiest. He wrote a *sefer* on *Chumash*. He writes over there (Vayikra 23:23) a very interesting thing. On Rosh Hashanah, there are three books that are open, for the *reshaim*, *tzaddikim* and *beinonim*. We all hope we're *beinonim*. And it says in the *gemara* (Rosh Hashana 16b) an interesting language.⁶ It says, *zachu*, if they (*beinonim*) merit, then they get written into the book of life. If they're not *zochu*, they don't merit, they get written in the book of death. Rav Moshe Alshich asks a great question: Why does the *gemara* say זכו או לא זכו? The *gemara* should have said, *shavu*. If they did *teshuvah*, they get put in the book of life. If they didn't do *teshuvah*, then they're put in the other book. Why does the *gemara* say a language of *zachu*, "if they merit"? It's a very unusual language. And he asks a series of other questions, and then he says a major *chiddush*. He says, you know, to get into the book of life, you don't have to do *teshuvah* on all of your sins. It's impossible for a person to do *teshuvah* on all his shortcomings in a couple of days. But he says, if a person does *teshuvah* on one small *cheit*, on one small sin, that person is already called *zachu*. That's why it doesn't say in the *gemara* 'shavu' because *shavu* would imply he has to do complete *teshuvah*, and 'zachu' implies he's *zocheh*. He gets a *zechus*.⁷

If Rav Moshe Alshich wrote that, and he held like that, you can take that to your bank! At the minimum, what everybody should do is to choose one area of their life that needs correction. And when they undertake to correct that, and they manage to do that, they have to know they acquired a very big *zechus*.

⁵ אבל אותם מצות שחייב בהם כל אדם מישראל מבלי שיתחדש בו סבה בעולם, הם בין פלם מאתים ושבעים, וסימנם אני ושנה וז' ע"ר. מהם שמונה וארבעים עשה ושנים ועשרים ומאתים לאוין, ותמצא כל אחת בסדר שלה בתוך הספר. והחייב של אלו לעשותן אינו בכל עת, רק בזמנים ידועים מהשנה או מן היום, חוץ מששה מצות מהן שחייבן תמיד, לא יפסק מעל האדם אפי' רגע בכל ימיו, ואלו הן: א' להאמין בשם. ב' שלא להאמין לזולתו. ג' ליחזק. ד' להקבא אותו. ה' לראה אותו. ו' שלא לתור אחר מחשבת הלב וראית העינים. סימנם שש ע"ר מקלט תהינה לכם (ספר החינוך, אגרת המחבר)

⁶ אמר ר' כרספדאי א"ר יוחנן ג' ספרים נפתחים ברא"ה א' של צדיקים גמורים וא' של רשעים גמורים וא' של בינונים. של רשעים גמורים נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיים, של בינונים גמורים נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיים, לא זכו נכתבין למיתה.

⁷ יתכן לפרש אומרו לאמר פעמיים, על דרך מאמרם ז"ל בראש השנה (טז ב) אמר ר' כרספדאי אמר ר' יוחנן שלשה ספרים נפתחים בראש השנה, אחד של צדיקים גמורים ואחד של רשעים גמורים ואחד של בינונים, של רשעים גמורים נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר למיתה, של צדיקים גמורים נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיים, בינונים תלויים ועומדים מראש השנה ועד יום הכיפורים, זכו נכתבים לחיים לא זכו נכתבין למיתה, אמר רבי אבין מאי קרא כו'. והרמב"ם (הל' תשובה פ"ג א"ג) פירש זכו ולא זכו שהוא עשו תשובה או לא עשו תשובה, ועל פירושו יש לדקדק למה לא פירש בגמרא שבו או לא שבו ולבא אל הענין נקדים עוד דקדוק מה בצע בשלשה ספרים והלא היה מספיק בשנים, באחד היו הצדיקים גמורים נכתבין לאלתר לחיים, ובשני הרשעים גמורים יכתבו לאלתר למיתה, והבינונים אם זכו יכתבו בספר שנכתבו הצדיקים ואם לא זכו יכתבו בספר שנכתבו בו הרשעים, וחדא יתורץ בחברתה מה שלא אמר שבו או לא שבו בא להורות כי אין צריך כי אם זכו זכות מה, וגם כי קל יהיה אם שב מאחת מחטאות אשר חטא גם כי קל יהיה, הלא יספיק להטות כף מאזניים להטות כלפי חסד, משא"כ אם היה אומר שבו שהיה נראה ששבו לגמרי מכל חטאתם ויהיו צדיקים גמורים, ואומרו לא זכו הוא ששום זכות לא עשו כי אם נשאר שקולים, וזהו מאמרם ז"ל (יומא פו א) ארבעה חלוקי כפרה הם ותשובה עם כל אחד מהם, והוא מאמריו על פסוק (לעיל טו ב) כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לפני ה' תטהרו, שאומר הוא יתברך כי ביום הזה יכפר אך כל זה בתשובה, ועל כן כדאי אזהרתו יתברך באומרו לפני ה' תטהרו להטות את הבלתי מטהר כלל בעשרת ימי תשובה אל כף חובה ולומר עליו לא זכה, שהרי לא שב אפילו באחד מאשמותיו לבל ישאר שקול ונכתב למיתה, אמנם לא יספיק זה שהוא בשב ואל תעשה להיות לו משפט הרשע הגמור שרובו עונות נכתב ונחתם למיתה, כי הוא בשב ואל תעשה חטא רק שנכתב ואינו נחתם, כאמר רב כרספדאי שבבינונים לא אמר לא זכו נכתבין ונחתמין, רק נכתבין ולא נחתמין, כי הפרש גדול יש בין כתיבה לבדה בלא חתימה שאמרו (ראש השנה י"ח א) גזרת הציבור אינה נחתמת וכו', והוא שאם יוסיף לשוב ולהיטיב יתוקן יותר בקלות, משא"כ אם היה גם כן חתימה, ועל כן נעשה ספר בפני עצמו לבינונים שאינם נכתבים עם הצדיקים גמורים שהם נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיים, ולא עם הרשעים שנחתמין לאלתר למיתה כי הם רשעים גמורים, והבינוני חטא רק בשב ואל תעשה, ולכך צריך שלשה ספרים. חנה היוצא לנו מכללות המאמר הלז הוא, כי ביום הרת עולם יום יעמיד במשפט כל יצורי עולמים שלשה ספרים נפתחים לפניו יתברך, ולי חכמו הרשעים הגמורים לעשות תשובה, בספר מיתה לא יכתבו, ורק יזכור זכרון תרועה והנכונה בשבירת לבם בתשובה לא יכתבו למיתה, ועל כן כל איש ישראל מקיימי מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך, הלא יאות לו כי לא בלבד יקבל מוסר לשוב עד ה', כי אם גם ילמד דעת את הזולת שישבו עד ה' כמוהו, וזה ענין הכותב וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, ואחר אומרו איך דבר ה' אל משה לאמר אמר אלהים אל משה, אל תאמר די לי כי אקהיל כל עדת ישראל לאמר להם הדבר וכל איש יקשט את עצמו, לזה אומר דבר אל בני ישראל לאמר גם הם לזולתם מישראל, והוא הנה בחודש השביעי באחד לחודש שהוא יום הדין עשו באופן יהיה לכם שבתון היא שמחה שיבולע המות, שלא יכתב איש בו למיתה, דהיינו שהיה זכרון תרועה לשון שבירת הלב והנכונה שיעצב כל אחד ברעיון לבו לומר מי יודע מה היה משפטי בעולם העליון אם טוב ואם רע, ובמה יהיה שבתון ושמחה, הלא בזכרון תרועה והנכונה על כל אשר חטא על הנפש, ולא בלבד בסיגופים ויודים כי בהרהור תשובה שהוא זכרון תרועה יהיה מקרא קודש, ואל תצומו בו לרחמכם, כי אם אכלו ושתו ושמחו כי שלום ביניכם לבין אלהיכם ותאכלו ותשבועו, וזהו וכל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו, כי אם מוק שאינה עבודה שהוא אשר יכפר לכל נפש שהוא לשמח במועד, טובו לאכול ולשמח במועד, ורק להרהר בראש השנה בתשובה ואפילו רשעים גמורים לא יכתבו למיתה, ודבר הקל כזה מי לא יעשנו, וזה בראש השנה, אך בעשור לחדש לא כן יהיה כי אם ועיניתם וכו'.

PARTIAL TESHUVAH IS ENOUGH

Now, Rav Yisrael Salanter told us an even bigger *chiddush*, that a person could be *zocheh*, merit, by doing *teshuvah* partially.⁸ That's what he says. You can do partial *teshuvah*. What does that mean? He says, let's say a person talks *lashon hara* and the person now says, that at a certain time of the day, I'm going to close my mouth and not talk *lashon hara*, or, I'm not going to talk at all no matter what. That person already did *teshuvah bemektzas* and that's worth gold. He said, that person now has a *shaychus* to Yom Kippur. Otherwise, you have no *shaychus* to Yom Kippur. No *teshuvah* at all. Just being well-meaning and telling Hashem, "I'd like to change," is not going to cut the mustard. It's not going to do the job. In order to make something happen, you have to decide how you're going to change.

GRAB THE OPPORTUNITY

Now, a very common thing in many families is that husbands and wives often disagree. He says one thing, and she says another. She overrides him, and he tells her to keep quiet. He comes home, and he's complaining about why the house is a mess, and she'll say to him, "Can't you stop that already? Every day, you come home like such a crank. What's your problem?" Then he says something back. If the lady would keep quiet, or the man would keep quiet, the man would save himself and acquire tremendous *zechusim* for himself, besides buying himself a good evening and a happy life. You don't realize that if a lady or a man kept their mouths quiet, they could save themselves from so much trouble. And I've told many ladies, "Why don't you keep quiet? So your husband put you down. So keep quiet. What's it going to help to open your mouth?" "No, you've got to stand up for yourself. It's a matter of principle. You've got to stand up." And the man tells me, "What? Am I going to let myself be a doormat?" And the lady says, "I don't want to be a doormat." No one wants to be a doormat. But I say, "Be a doormat." You want to get a *zechus*? Be a doormat for a little bit. Don't worry, you're not a doormat. You'll get yourself a *zechus* like you never got. You have to seize this moment.

One of the most common *aveiros* is *lashon hara*. That's prevalent all over. It's crazy. With all the books, and all the stories, and all the Chafetz Chaim events, it's very difficult not to talk *lashon hara*. But if you take yourself a half hour every day, and you're *mekabel* not to talk *lashon hara* and you put that little note on your refrigerator, and you tell your family, "Daddy is not talking *lashon hara* from this to this time." You tell it to your wife. You tell it to your kids. "No *lashon hara* now." You know what you're going to accomplish? You'll be able to come to Hashem and say, "Hashem, I'd like something this Yom Kippur." Then you ask Hashem for help, *parnasah*, or whatever it is.

TZEDAKAH AS A MERIT FOR YOM KIPPUR

Tzedakah, we know, is a very big thing. I think the Sefardim also say: תשובה תפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רע הגזירה. [Rav Brog was speaking in front of a Sephardic community]. It's universal. It's not only the Ashkenazim. Sefardim say it too. *Baruch Hashem*. And it works. *Tzedakah* works. A person should make up his mind to give *tzedakah*. Be *mekabel* upon yourself, "Ribono Shel Olam, this year, *bli neder* I'm going to give *tzedakah* every single day." Decide how much you're going to give. Every day give a certain amount. It doesn't have to be extravagant. It could be a small amount.

I know of a great *rav* (R' Avrohom Shlomo Yavo, the Lemberger Rav) who said that my grandfather (Rav Avidgor Miller) came to him in a dream after he died, and he asked him to please give a minimal amount of *tzedakah* for my grandfather's merit every single day. *Mamash* a very small amount. When I heard that, I decided I'm also going to do it. I gave more than my grandfather asked for. I do it for three people every day. I give for my *rebbe* (Rav Meir Halevi Soloveichik), I give for my father (Rav Shmuel Elchanon Brog) and I give for my grandfather. Every single day. Sometimes you're out of town, you miss it, then you've got to make it up. Say, "Hashem, I want to have an investment in *tzedakah* and *chesed*."

That's not where it ends though. That's where it starts. You have to undertake for yourself to give *tzedakah* every single day. It's a tremendous *zechus*. And if you push yourself a little bit then, pshhh! *Ashrecha vetov lach*.

THE "LIFE" WE SHOULD ASK FOR

Now I'm going to tell you a *chiddush* that you probably have never heard before. When I thought about it the first time, it made a tremendous impression on me. What's the first thing we ask for, the first request we ask Hashem for on Rosh Hashanah? *Chaim*. *Zochreinu l'chaim*. That's what we say. Remember us for life. What does a person think about when he says that? What is a person thinking about when he asks that? You know what he's thinking about? "I don't want to die this year, Hashem. I shouldn't have an accident. No one should shoot me. No one should accost me. Just let me live through the year."

Now doing that is terrible. You know why? Because if you're in a hospital and you're breathing, you're also living. 'Living' does not mean just living. Human beings would never be satisfied with just living. I don't want to just live. You see, if somebody would come to me and say to me, "How would you like me to give you a shot? Every day, I'll give you a shot and I'm going to give you all the nutrients that you need for your diet in that one subcutaneous injection. You won't have to eat and bother with food anymore." Do you know of any normal person that would accept that? I know I wouldn't accept it. I know a person who had a feeding tube. I felt terrible for him.

⁸ Ed. note: in previous shiurim, we mentioned a well-known incident with R' Shlomo Hoffman (1922-2013) that took place in the hallway of Chevron Yeshiva in 1938, where as a young 16-year old bocher, he met the Rosh HaYeshiva, Rav Yechezkel Sarna (1890-1969), during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva. The Rosh Yeshiva asked him why he looked so serious and sad. R' Shlomo replied that, according to Rambam, the real teshuva is achieved only when a person can testify on himself and he'll never return to his aveirah, and therefore his seriousness and sadness stemmed from the fact that this was a seemingly impossible level of achievement. Rav Sarna sternly answered him that we don't follow the stringent opinion of the Rambam, but rule more leniently, according to Rabbeinu Yonah, who says that the teshuva required for the atonement on Yom Kippur means 'standing on the right path.' Rav Yechezkel proceeded to relate a mashal (which he had heard from the Alter of Slobodka, who heard it from Rav Yisroel Salanter). In a more modern version of the mashal, Rav Sarna portrayed a car taking a passenger from Meah Shearim to Bnei Brak, when after some time, that passenger realizes that he's near Mitzpeh Ramon, in the Negev, three hours away from Bnei Brak. As long as the car can be turned around now to head in the right direction, even though he'll still be very far from his destination, he'll be traveling in the 'right direction.' Rav Yechezkel said that one cannot achieve complete teshuva in the Aseres Yemei Teshuva or even know how long it may take to get there, but to head in the right direction is the very least of what he can do! Rav Yisroel Salanter deduced this principle of "partial teshuva" of Yom Kippur from the fact that the gemora in Niddah (70b) refers to those people whose demise Hashem does not desire, as "doing teshuva," not those who "have done teshuva." Similarly, the gemora in Shavuos (13a) says that Yom Kippur atones for those who are "doing teshuva" (shavim), not those who "have done teshuva" (shavu).

I met him when we were at a hotel for Yom Tov. It cost a lot of money, and he brought his whole family and he dropped \$100,000 for a few days at that hotel. I was watching him and I was wondering why he wasn't eating. I asked one of his sons, "Why doesn't your father eat?" He said, "He's on a feeding tube. He can't eat." I said, "You're kidding me." A very wealthy man, but he had no enjoyment from food.

A human being cannot live without enjoyment. That's a fact. You're not ever aware of it. There's no one in the world that doesn't need *ta'anug*. You need *ta'anug* to support your life. To live as a vegetable in a hospital, no one wants to be. To live as a vegetable in your home, no one wants to be.

You know what that's called? *Chiyus*. There's *chaim* and then there's *chiyus*. '*Chiyus*' means the quality of life. If you ever see a person who has quality of life, you say, "That guy is alive. That guy is really alive." You want to be alive.

Now, to be alive, most human beings seek physical pleasures. For one guy, it's food. People love to immerse themselves in food, and that becomes their *ta'anug*. There are people who love exercise. They work out religiously. They'll tell you it's for the exercise. It's not for the exercise. It's because it gives them a feeling of wow! The endorphins start to flow, and you feel *mamash* alive. People have many different things. People have hobbies that they do. People do this. People do that. It's all because they're seeking *chiyus*.

LIFE FROM TORAH AND MITZVOS

Rabbosai, the main *chiyus* that Hashem wants us to have is from Torah and *mitzvos*. What most people don't realize is that our Torah is a *Toras chaim*. Doing *mitzvos* gives a person, not just physical life, it gives him or her a meaningful life. It gives a life to live for. It gives you purpose in your life. It makes you feel alive. But most people don't feel alive from *mitzvos*. Sadly, you know what they feel? Dead.

I remember being in a *shul* once. One summer, I arrived at a certain neighborhood in the morning, and I went to the *shul* there. It looked like a morgue. I thought I was a living person among people who were not alive any more. There were older people. Not one of them had their *tefillin* on in the right place. The *davening* was lacking any semblance of *avodas halev*. I felt terrible for these people. They were dead. They were walking-dead people. And so many people have that same experience!

Ask yourself, do you have a feeling of *chiyus* from prayer? Do you have a feeling of *chiyus* from learning Torah? Learning Torah should pump you up to the sky. I once witnessed a *tzaddik*, a *talmid chacham*, the son-in-law of the Brisker Rav having *chiyus* from Torah. He had just lost his daughter. His name was Rav Yechiel Michel Feinstein (1906-2003), related to Rav Moshe Feinstein, a massive *talmid chacham*. And he lost his daughter in a very tragic way. She had asthma, and although they had four asthma machines in the house, she got an asthma attack and they couldn't find one of the nebulizers. They were running all over. All four were right in the house and they couldn't find them. She had brothers, her mother, her father - all were looking for that medication - and she died. It was a terrible tragedy. They're very emotional people and he was *mamash* broken.

This happened in the summer, around Tisha B'Av. The following Sukkos, I went to pay him a visit. He was in his *sukkah*. I came to his *sukkah* and R' Yechiel Michel's son-in-law was standing outside and he said, "What do you want?" I said, "I would like to visit your father-in-law and wish him a *gut yontif*, a *gut moed*." He said, "You could go in, but you can't talk." I said, "Why not?" "He told me he's very *tzubrochen*. He's very broken over the loss of his daughter. You surely heard about the loss of his daughter." I said, "He's still broken from then? Unbelievable." He said, "Yeah." I said, "So what's he doing in there?" He said, "Go in. You'll see."

I walked into the *sukkah*. There was nobody else there. There was a long table. Rav Yechiel Michel was sitting at the head of the table. I sat down and took a seat at the side and I just watched. He was learning *gemara* with a *kol*. He was reading the *gemara*, *amar Rava amar Abaye* and he was reading it with such a *geshmak* and such a feeling. He was lost in the *gemara*. I watched this in amazement. Maybe five or ten minutes went by, and suddenly he lifted up his eyes and he saw me sitting there. He said to me, "A *gut moed*. *Shalom aleichem*." As soon as he said that, his whole entire face contorted and he began to cry terribly. I never witnessed such a thing! I said, "Unshuldig." I said, "I'm sorry. Excuse me." He said, "You know I had a tragedy, right? You heard?" I said, "I heard." He said, "I can't. *Ich ken nisht*." He said, "I can't come back to myself. The only thing that I have is the *gemara*. When I learn the *gemara* I'm in a different world." I said, "Okay, I'm not going to disturb you. Go back to your *gemara*." He was crying. He turned back to the *gemara*, *amar Rava*. His face suddenly became relaxed, chilled. It was like someone gave him a shot.

I've seen people at funerals, family members get overwhelmed, so they give them a shot to relax them. But with this man, I saw the *chaim*. I saw that *chiyus* he got from his learning. I sat there for a half hour just watching it. He mentioned this *passuk* to me. He said, "לולא תורתך שעשועי אז אבדתי בעיני", Dovid Hamelech said, "If I wouldn't have had the Torah to give me *chaim*, to pump me with *chaim*, I would have been lost in my affliction, in my pain, in my suffering" (Tehillim 119:92). That's what saved Dovid Hamelech.

You must ask for *chiyus*, rabbosai. When you're saying now *zochreinu l'chaim*, don't just ask to live through the next year. That's one thing. Of course you want to live through the next year. But you want to live with *chiyus*. You want to have some quality of life. You want to feel *mitzvos*.

People who have *chiyus* from *mitzvos* don't need to go to Aruba. I was talking to a guy who told me he's going to Aruba. I said, "You're that sick? Is your family this depressed that you need to go to Aruba? Are you a broken family? Why would you want to go to a crazy *meshugene* place like Aruba? To do what? That's the nuttiest thing I've heard of in my life. You must be the saddest people around. I want to give you *brachah* that you should find *simchas hachaim*." He said, "Rebbi, I'll have a great time down there." I said, "Yeah? And my kid loves playing with Tinker toys. He loves the Tinker toys. He loves the building sets. He loves moving the cars around the floor. He's also having a good time. That's the kind of good time you're having? Shame on you! What are you doing?" People don't get it. That's not *chaim*. That's death. That's death warmed over. You go there and you sit on the beach, you do this and that.

Chaim means you *daven* - and you feel it. You learn Torah - and you feel it. Now, you can't learn Torah for a whole day. It takes a lot to build that up. But when you see or hear about *tzaddikim* that are sitting and learning for hours, they're not forcing themselves to learn. I know what everybody is thinking. Everybody is thinking, "Oy, I try to learn. I sit down and in five minutes I can't sit anymore."

I can't concentrate. I'm falling asleep. I need to walk. I go for a coffee. I go for a tea. I go for a talk with somebody. I go for this. I go for that." People have no feelings for true *ruchniyus*.

LIFE FROM DOING CHESSED

Women do *mitzvos* all day long. Women have called me up many times and said, "My Rosh Hashanah is not a Rosh Hashanah. My Yom Kippur is not Yom Kippur. I don't feel it. I'm home with my kids, diapering diapers." And I said, "You know what my grandfather said? You're doing *avodas Hashem*! You're serving Hashem! You're doing *chessed*. Your kids are orphans." And I tell them a story.

The Chafetz Chaim's grandson (Rav Hillel Zaks, 1931-2015) learned in Lakewood for a while. He was a young, married man. He used to come to *tefillah*. He was a *talmid chacham*, a great man. He ended up being a great *rosh yeshivah*. One day, the *mashgiach* noticed he didn't show up for *tefillah* for a few days. He called him over. He said, "That's not honorable for you. You're the Chafetz Chaim's grandson. You don't come to *davening* in the *yeshivah*. What's *pshat*?" R' Hillel said, "I'll tell you. I get up every day on time and I set out to go, and then suddenly I'm accosted by a widow and she has little children and the little children are screaming and my heart breaks for her and I have to help her." The *mashgiach* said, "Taka?" He said, "Yeah, *taka*." He said, "Can you tell me who it is? I want to go to visit them, too. I also want to participate in that *mitzvah*." He said, "Yeah, I'll tell you. It's my wife. My wife! She's overwhelmed. She's not been feeling well the last few days. Without me, she's an *almanah*. If I walk out on her, she's an *almanah*." The *mashgiach* said, "You taught me a lesson. You taught me a lesson." That's a lesson.

But a lady also has to know she's doing a tremendous *mitzvah*. You shouldn't feel bad. Your job is not to *daven*. Your job is to take care of your children, if you have children. And if you don't think about it as a *mitzvah*, you'll never feel good about it. You'll never feel motivated by it. You'll never feel any *chaim* from it. But if you take it to heart, then you're going to feel *chiyus*. Try it!

Rabbosai, you must *daven* the next few days to be *zocheh* to *chaim* for *mitzvos*. Can you imagine a person asking Hashem for some true *chaim* from the *Toras chaim*?! He wants to feel it. Do you think Hashem is not going to give it to him?! Hashem is going to bless you. Hashem is going to shower you. Hashem is going to give you opportunities. You have a chance to give *tzedakah*. Think about it. *Tzedakah*, a few pennies, a few cents. Big deal! No one is going bankrupt from that. Thank Hashem for giving you an opportunity to do a tremendous *mitzvah*. It says *צדקה תציל ממות* (Mishley 10:2). You know what kind of opportunity that is? You know how good you should feel about it? Most people don't feel good about it. Some like to do it because it's *mitzvah*, an opportunity. You should feel pumped by doing it. Because you're doing a *mitzvah* that only you can do. It's your opportunity. That's tremendous! Now, you may still think, "How can it be tremendous? It's not worth much. It's just a few quarters." But you push yourself a little bit and you make it worth a little bit. If you do that, you're going to be *zocheh* to *chaim*.

Over the next few days, when you say *zochreinu l'chaim*, say, "Hashem, the *chaim* I'm looking for is not just breathing. I want to have *chiyus* from doing *chessed*, from raising a family, from supporting a family." Every time your wife asks you for something, money, you say, "Oh, not again." You roll your eyes. "Again? And again? What do you need now? Didn't you just buy everybody shoes? Now you need clothes? Now you need this?" Realize that it's an opportunity for you to do *mitzvos*. *Chap arein!* Seize the opportunities, rabbosai.

May you all be *zocheh* to have a wonderful great year. *Gemar chasimah tovah* to all of you.

IN CONCLUSION

The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are very special days when we can do *teshuvah* and commit to Torah and *mitzvos* much more easily than during other times. Apart from our *teshuvah* being accepted immediately, as the Ramabam says, Hashem makes Himself available and He is closer to us than during the rest of the year. This makes it a propitious time to make requests of Hashem. However, we should not squander this special opportunity to *daven* for mere riches. We should *daven* for life - and not mere physical life, but *chiyus*, quality of life, a life that is worth living. When we *daven* for *chiyus*, we should ask Hashem to give us feeling to Torah and *mitzvos* so that we profit from these days into the year ahead, with renewed capabilities to learn Torah, to uphold the *mitzvos* Hashem commanded to us and to perform *chessed*. Apart from grabbing as many *mitzvah* opportunities, such as *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*, in these days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, this is an opportunity to decide that going forward, we will actively do *mitzvos* on a regular basis and improve wherever we need. This week (*bli neder*), I will choose one area of my life that needs correction, whether it is giving *tzedakah*, doing *chessed*, improving in *shemiras Shabbos*, or some other *mitzvah*, and commit to doing something on a daily basis for the year ahead.