

פ' האזינו ויו"כ תשפ"ד

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LACK OF GRATITUDE

“O foolish people [“novol”] and unwise” (32:6). Rashi says that “foolish” refers to someone lacking gratitude. As the Ramban points out, this character trait makes someone so corrupt that he is no longer considered to be a person, but only a *neveilo* (carcass). Therefore, such a person is necessarily also “unwise”, since it is an iron rule that the Torah only resides in the heart of someone who has amended his faulty character traits, as Rabeinu Yonah says, “First a person has to amend his character traits. That way will the Torah will dwell within him, for it never dwells in a body which does not possess good character traits”.

PUPIL OF HIS EYE

“He protected them as the pupil of His eye” (32:10). Rashi: *This refers to the black part of the eye, from which the light is reflected outward*

The greater the darkness, and the black surrounding it, the more prominent the light that illuminates it. Hence, nowadays when darkness is to be found everywhere, with the very atmosphere permeated with trials unknown to previous generations, how great must be the reward of those keeping *mitzvos* who illuminate their actions in the midst of the darkness, and with a small quantity of light much darkness can be eradicated.

This applies, in particular, to those who find themselves amongst people who are devoid of any spark of faith. With each *mitzvah* and *zikuy horabim* we accumulate more merits than our forefathers in bygone generations, since our actions are more conspicuous amongst the prevalent darkness, and Hashem guards our good deeds like the Pupil of His Eye.

NEW HERESIES

“Deities they did not know, new things that only recently came, which your forefathers did not fear” (32:17).

The early generations of idol worshippers believed in a Creator, but the last generations prior to the coming of *moshiach* are full of philosophies containing new atheistic heresies without any religion or faith at all. Their followers worship their own desires and the evil inclination, and attribute all their successes to their own handiwork. Unfortunately, many of our coreligionists participated in these movements and philosophies, which our forefathers did not know, and they constitute a difficult test for the Jews, which has been decreed upon the last generations prior to the coming of *moshiach*.

HESTER PONIM

“And He said, “I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end will be” (32:20).

Contrary to popular belief, *hester ponim* does not mean that Hashem removes His Providence abandoning us to the mercies of others. G-d forbid to entertain such an idea, since Hashem promised that He will never remove His kindness from us. When He is in pain, we are in pain. However, based on our deeds and situation the ways of Providence may change so that instead of a revealed Divine providence Hashem puts in place a concealed Providence in which His love for us is less obvious.

Rav Shmuel Bornstein of Sochotchov compares Hashem’s conduct with the Jews to a father teaching his son to walk on his own. The father hides from the son in order to get him to run after him and take steps on his own, without any assistance. He watches his son’s steps from a distance,

and as soon as he senses that his son is going to fall, he immediately runs to him to support him. Similarly, Hashem says that He will hide His face from us, so that we will have to look after ourselves without Divine assistance as it were, but Hashem will “see what their end will be”: He watches us in order to straighten our ways and guide our actions.

“NATIONAL JUDAISM”

“They have moved me to jealousy with a no-god; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with a no-people” (32:21).

This *possuk* may be taken as an allusion to current times in which those who uproot the Torah have invented a “Judaism” without a G-d, stripped of religion, with only the symbols of a nation, a state and language, their goal being to turn the Jewish nation into a nation like any other. In doing so, they have provoked Hashem’s anger with their vanities. Hashem will be moved to jealousy for His sake in order to prove that “national Judaism” without a G-d is recipe for a “no-people”, since the nation cannot continue to exist just by possessing national symbols without the observance of Torah and cleaving to Hashem.

OLOM HABO

“I kill and I make alive” (32:39).

The Ibn Ezra writes that many people interpreted this *possuk* as a biblical source for the eternal soul and the afterlife. He notes that Rav Hai Gaon suggested that the Torah does not explicitly talk about *Olom Habo* because these matters were handed down by oral tradition. The Ibn Ezra himself suggests that since the Torah was given to the entire nation and meant to be universally understood it does not talk about such a topic, which is very profound and understood only by “one in a thousand” people. Our reward in *Olom Habo* depends on the state of the *neshomo*, the quality of which is the result of “working on our hearts”. This *avodas halev* is achieved by contemplating the handiwork of Hashem, which is the ladder one has to climb in order to acquire the fundamental quality of knowing Hashem.

A person’s *avodas halev* consists in performing *mitzvos* with joy and enthusiasm, thereby molding and refining his *neshomo* and making it an appropriate vessel for receiving the spiritual pleasure of closeness to the Creator in the afterlife. Just like the form of the face differs from person to person, so does the form of the *neshomo*, and the person himself shapes it. It takes on a new form on a daily basis based on the person’s *avodo*. Each person, based on his level of *avodas halev*, and the extent to which he has contemplated the ways of Hashem, is able to cleave to the Creator, which is the preparation for the afterlife.

This difference between people’s *neshomos* cannot be understood easily intellectually using terminology stemming from *Olom Hazeh*, and therefore the whole topic of *Olom Habo* was not set out explicitly in the Torah, because the Torah was handed down to people with physical bodies who are meant to observe it with *mitzvos* pertaining to physical matters such as eating and speaking. Hence, *Olom Habo* is only hinted at in the Torah *sheba'al pe*.

YOM KIPPUR

PURITY

Throughout the year when a person repents, Hashem forgives him, but on Yom Kippur Hashem grants him a type of repentance and purity which cleanses the stains from his soul. Once he has repented properly, and his soul has been purified, he can pray with greater concentration, and also produce *chiddushei Torah*, since he is now closer to Hashem.

The holiest day of the year is known as Yom Kippurim in the plural, because there are innumerable gradations of repentance, depending on how much a person invests on that day and

during the Ten Days of Repentance. You can have two people seated next to each other looking the same outwardly, but one of them has become suffused with sanctity, whereas the other has remained with a great degree of *tumah* attached to his *neshomo* because he has not utilized the opportunities presented by this day.

RESOLUTIONS

The Chasam Sofer explains that the reason most people do not stick to their Yom Kippur resolutions is that those resolutions are usually about positive actions, since people find it too difficult to resolve to refrain from severe sins such as *bitul Torah* and *loshon horo*, and if they continue to commit those sins they remain surrounded by a spirit of impurity, and lack the divine assistance to be successful in sticking to their resolutions to perform positive deeds. Therefore, it is important to realize that a person's main focus during these days of repentance should be on *sur mera* (avoiding sins), which in the case of *bnei Torah* primarily means *bitul Torah*, which is considered a form of showing contempt for the Torah.

SOTON'S "PRAISE"

On Yom Kippur the *soton* testifies that we are like angels who do not eat or drink. We know that the *soton* does not have permission to speak evil of us on Yom Kippur, but it seems surprising that he actually comes to commend us. In truth, he is not singing our praises. He is telling Hashem that it is hardly surprising that on this day the Jews repent and find favor in His eyes, since they have reached the level of angels, but the following day when they return to their routine they will revert to their sinful ways. However, Hashem in His great mercy examines the innermost recesses of a person's thoughts and He knows that, on the contrary, our will is to perform His will and when we return to Him wholeheartedly on Yom Kippur that is a reflection of a Jew's real essence, and even if he sometimes descends from his real level that does not detract from that level which he was privileged to attain on Yom Kippur.

OPPORTUNITY

Just like a person immersing himself in a *mikveh* cannot be purified if there is an intervening object (*chatzizo*) so too in order to merit complete purification *teshuva* must be of a corresponding quality. Hence, ideally, a person should reach the stage that Hashem can testify that he will never commit the sin again, as explained by the Rambam. However, it would appear that even if he knows that he will sin again after Yom Kippur, but he has put in place certain precautions to make it more difficult for him to commit the sin again, that is also considered a partial *teshuva* removing some of the stain of the sin, because the lack of *chatzizo* is not a prerequisite for meriting partial purity. Hence, even someone who feels that he cannot perform complete *teshuva* should still take the opportunity to remove some of the spiritual soil separating him from Hashem throughout the year, which confuses him during prayers and prevents him from performing *mitzvos* properly.

PRAYER

The main thing is not to pray only for our private material matters but also to pray that Hashem's Name should no longer be desecrated and that we should finally merit the redemption. In the well-known parable this is compared to a minister who was imprisoned and was told that any request he would make would be granted by the king, so he asked to be allotted more bread and water than the small amounts allotted to other prisoners. Everyone made fun of him because he could have asked to be released completely from prison. Similarly, we should ask on Yom

Kippur for an end to *golus* and for Hashem's honor to be increased in the world. If we do so, this gives pleasure to the holy *shechino* which is in our midst on this holiest day. We are not commanded to go up to the *Beis Hamikdosh* on *Rosh Hashono* and *Yom Kippur*, because on those days and also during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvo* Hashem is present everywhere with each and every Jew at every moment, so that there is no need to go to Yerushalayim to receive His presence.

EVIL DECREES

In addition to the precious opportunity to achieve atonement, the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvo* also present an opportunity to annul evil decrees. Once they have been pronounced, decrees are much more difficult to overturn, and therefore only a fool would not do whatever he can to exploit the special opportunity afforded by this period. Something that can only be attained with much toil during the rest of the year, can be achieved during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvo* through prayer, repentance and determined resolution. Of course, the door is always open, but during this period prayer has greater effect and repentance is obtained more easily.

RAV SCHNEIDER'S NE'ILAH DROSHO IN 1943

When speaking about *gezel* in his speech before *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur, Rav Moshe Schneider would note that not only working people have to be careful about theft, but also *yeshivah bochurim* and *avreichim*, because donors expect those learning in the institutions they support to dedicate themselves to Torah study, and if they waste their time instead, they are guilty of theft. If they are to be seen outside the *beis hamedrash* altogether, they are also guilty of desecrating Hashem's Name in public, which even Yom Kippur does not atone for.

Rav Schneider also noted that if Reuven talks to Shimon who is learning, thereby causing him to lose time from learning, Reuven is considered a *gazlan*, because stealing a fellow Jew's time and depriving him of the opportunity to learn Torah during that time is an offshoot of theft.

On Yom Kippur 5704 (1943) Rav Sternbuch recalls how Rav Schneider delivered his speech before *Ne'ilah*, sobbing throughout. He said that he had heard from a reliable witness that Rav Yaakov Lorberbaum, author of the *Nesivos*, spoke about the "*cheit hayadu'a*" in his *Ne'ilah drosho* and aroused his entire audience, including children, to tears, until they could be heard from a distance.

Rav Schneider said that even though he did not usually speak about this topic, if the *Nesivos* already found it necessary to address it, how much more so was it imperative to do so now, when hundreds of thousands of our brethren were being mercilessly slaughtered in Europe. Who knows, he said, if the "*cheit hayadu'a*" was not the cause of this, since the *gemoro* says that this sin is considered the equivalent of shedding the blood of infants? Perhaps, then, we were being punished for this act of cruelty on our part for not doing enough to protect our children and to prevent the plague of immorality spreading to such a great extent. He exhorted all those present to undertake to preserve the holy covenant, the *bris kodesh*, and Hashem, in turn, would preserve His covenant with His nation and protect us. He added that during *neila* Hashem judges us on His own (see Yerushalmi Sanhedrin) and we have the possibility to take action in order to achieve complete atonement. His sobbing eventually became uncontrollable, at which point he stopped and went to the *omud* to start *Neila*.