

wearing our new outfits and eating all the delicacies that we prepared. We are trembling with joy, because we know that the Awesome King who is judging mankind is also our Father.

I will never forget how my high school principal (this goes back many years ago) used to tell us every year that his favorite holiday is *Rosh Hashana*. I actually thought he was being facetious and couldn't completely comprehend what he meant. It took me a few years to get it. But when I did, I was blown away. In fact, with his outlook on *Rosh Hashana*, it didn't take long for the holy day of *Yom Kippur* to become my favorite *Yom Tov*.

What special days we were given to achieve the purpose for which we have come to this world. *Yom Kippur* is called "Yishi" - my salvation, because on *Rosh Hashana*, "We see the light" we get the clarity that is necessary to do real *teshuvah* and so we have 10 days to do *teshuvah*. We have *Aseres Yemei teshuvah*, 10 days in which we need to turn that beautiful picture of *Rosh Hashana*, that momentary flash of the camera, to reality. When we truly do *teshuvah* and

return to *Hashem* at this time, we enter into *Yom Kippur*, the day of salvation and are completely cleansed of all our sins by our beloved Father in Heaven.

Only then can we enter the *sukkah*, the private chamber of *Hashem*, like the *yichud* room between us and *Hashem*, where the *zman simchaseinu* is palpable. The joy of *Sukkos* depends on the mindset of *Elul* and the clarity of *Rosh Hashana* and the *teshuvah* of *Aseres Yemei teshuvah* and the *selicha* and *kappara* of *Yom Kippur*.

It is a chain reaction of the most wonderful and lofty levels that man can achieve. It is the way we start the new year, with a burst of *Emes*, truth, so that we remember as the year goes by what we are meant to accomplish in 5785.

Remember, *Hashem* goes wherever you let Him in, and all of those *hirschurei teshuvah* you feel when you are eating, cooking, walking, or even shopping with your kids are the small steps pushing you in the right direction. So follow your heart and keep going forward and up ... right into the loving embrace of your Father, your King.

בהרין עירובא דא שרא לנא ... (נוסח של עירוב תבשילין)

לעולוי נשמת אבינו מורטו ורובטו חרב חיים
קסוף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קופמאן זצ"ל

מחשבת הלב

maybe not so perfectly, that is the real reflection of who we are. As we usher in the new year and prepare the *eiruv*, let us remember that specifically through our *nisyonos* - "לנא יאה - will we be permitted to prepare for the future, the שכולו שבת ויום."

May we all be *zoche* to a טובה וחתימה טובה.

יצב נבולות עמים למספר בני ישראל ... (דברים לב-ה)

Klal Yisroel reads this *parsha* after *Rosh Hashana*, every year, as we stand in limbo until our individual verdicts are sealed (hopefully *l'tova*) on *Yom Kippur*. This would explain the above *posuk*. *Hashem* establishes all the borders of the *goyim*; all that will happen to them. (As we say in *davening* And the *posuk* above says, "למספר בני ישראל" - this is all done according to how it will affect the yidden.

There is a well known **Ramban** who says that *Shiras Haazinu* includes the present, the past, the future, *olam hazeh* and *olam haba*. **R' Moshe Wolfson זצ"ל**, in his *sefer אמונת עתיד*, explains this *Ramban*. He says since it coincides with *Shabbos Shuva*, our introspection and repentance at this juncture connects us to the past and present, and will also impact our futures here and in the next world. He then relates a story of the *Ramban's* disciple named Avner who became an apostate after the *Ramban* exclaimed that each person's name is symbolized in this *parsha*.

Years went by and Avner came to visit his *rebbe* and brazenly asked where his name is found. The *Ramban* prayed for *Siyata diShmaya* and received divine wisdom. He quoted the *posuk* "אפאיהם אשביתה מאוטו זכרם", and said the third letter of each of these words spells out "אבנר". Legend has it

If you are reading this *vort* and have not yet remembered to make an *eiruv tavshilin*, please hurry home to arrange one or ask your *Rov* for guidance and direction.

Over the course of the upcoming *Yamim Tovim* we will have several opportunities to be *mekaveim* the unique and special *mitzvah* of *eiruv tavshilin*. The basic concept is, that in order to prepare on *Yom Tov* for *Shabbos*, one must have made this *eiruv* before *Yom Tov*. It is then reckoned like he already started his *Shabbos* cooking prior to *Yom Tov*, and is just completing his *Shabbos* preparations on Friday - *Erev Shabbos*.

The **Maharal זצ"ל** explains this concept *al pi drush*. *Shabbos*, *Chazal* say, is a reference to עולם הבא, while *Yom Tov* alludes to ימות המשיח. How can we prepare for *Olam Haba* during the days of *Moshiach* - days that we no longer have to wage war against the *Yetzer Hara*? We find the answer on *erev Yom Tov*. Based on our actions in *Olam Hazeh*, we prepare and pave the way. Then, on *Yom Tov* itself, the ימות המשיח, we are merely finishing off our preparations. As *Chazal* say, "מי שטרר בערב שבת יאכל בשבת". The emphasis is on the טרר, the efforts expended, and not necessarily the final results. That is the yardstick used by *Hashem* to measure our merits. When He sees the טרר, especially in difficult circumstances, then even when the going is easy we still receive full credit.

Throughout the year we each have good days, *yamim tovim*, and frustrating ones. We tend to think that the days that weigh heavily on the merit side of our Heavenly scale are the days in which our *avodas Hashem* flows smoothly and unimpeded. In truth, the opposite is correct. If on the challenging days, we still manage our *avodas Hashem*, albeit

whimpered, "This time I am not leaving until you assure me that I will have a child!" She wailed bitterly and collapsed. I ran to summon help and arranged for the poor woman to be taken to the *Rebbetzin's* private chamber.

"When I returned to my post, the *tzaddik* asked me to relay a message to the poor woman. "Tell her that during this coming *Rosh Hashana*, she should come to our *shul* to *daven*; she should stand in the right-hand corner of the women's section during *shofar* blowing. With *Hashem's* help, she will be blessed with a son."

"As it happened, I could not transmit the *Rebbe's* message straightaway, for I was told to wait outside while the woman regained her composure. As I paced outdoors in the evening air, I pictured how she would return home to her husband and how excited they would be at this great new development. And then, in my mind's eye I saw my wife and the stillness that prevailed in our own household for so many years now. An inner voice goaded me: "Head on home and relay the *Rebbe's* instructions to your wife; tell her what the *tzaddik* said." No matter how I tried to quell that inner force, it was of no use.

"The *Rebbetzin* interrupted my thoughts. I went in to face a broken woman with tear-stained, swollen eyes and couldn't bring myself to say anything. I escaped the premises and ran home."

The lights in the *Beis Medrash* had already gone out. The *Chassidim* at the table were barely visible to Reb Gershon, who could feel their breath and the palpable tenseness. "That night when I asked my wife whether she desired to have a son, she thought I wasn't feeling too well. But from the moment I gave her the *tzaddik's* instructions, our lives changed and the world took on new meaning for us.

"One day, the woman in the fine carriage showed up at the *Rebbe's* court again. She approached me as she had so often in the past and beseeched me to allow her an audience with the *tzaddik*. I was shocked to see her and began to shake. I hesitated and stalled - and then I heard the *Rebbe* call my name. He stood in the doorway for long moments that seemed like hours and then motioned for me to come in.

"With eyes averted, he intoned, "As of right now, you are no longer my *Shamash*. You are hereby dismissed from your post." I never saw the woman again.

Some weeks later my wife gave birth to a stillborn child. An air of gloom and darkness settled heavily upon us; my despondent wife practically stopped talking to me altogether. Since that day, I have guarded my terrible secret of having snatched away a blessing a blessing that belonged to another."

Stillness reigned as the first light of daybreak cast its rays through the windows of the large *shul*. The *Chassidim* were rooted in their seats, gripped by Reb Gershon's pain. (Excerpted from "Forever in Awe" by R. Weiss)

משל למה הדבר דומה

לבו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים ושלחו מנות לאין נכון כי קדוש היום לארנינו ואל תעצבו כי הדות ה' היא מעובם ... (נחמיה ה.)

משל: There was once a land which was blessed with a very devoted king, a monarch who took his royal responsibilities very seriously. He did not ignore the people; he listened to all his subjects who came to him for help and worked hard to assist them. Eventually, after hearing so many sob-filled stories for such a long period of time, he became depressed.

Soon it became a national crisis; the nation's beloved king was sick - and getting worse each day. His close ministers convened a meeting, and it was decided to call a world-renowned specialist in from a far-away land.

The specialist arrived shortly thereafter. After a number of tests, the prestigious doctor came up with a diagnosis; the king was chronically depressed and the only thing that can cure him would be if he wears a "happy man's" shirt.

Thus began an extensive search throughout the realm for a genuinely "happy man." Special convoys of ministers were dispatched all around the land in search of this atypical individual, a man who was sincerely happy. However, search as they may, not one single person fit the bill. There were happy people, to be sure, but when asked if extra money or possessions would bring them additional joy, they all had to admit to the truth. It would not. The ministers were dismayed;

they were not going to be able to help their beloved king.

Suddenly, on their trip back to the palace, off a forest dirt road, they heard the sound of unmistakable joy. Someone living far out in the forest was going about his business with a hum of unusual content and happiness. They approached the man and began questioning him, and it soon turned out that this man was genuinely a real "happy man"!

Overjoyed, the ministers explained their story and about the cure they needed for the sick king. But the man was confused. "I would love to help you, I really would," explained the happy man, "but I don't own a shirt!"

נמשל: On *Rosh Hashana* we stand before the King of Kings with fear and trepidation, beseeching Him for a good and prosperous year. Despite this, the *Navi* tells us not to forget that this day is a holiday, a happy day as well. This is something novel to think about on this holy day. The attribute of happiness is so essential to our daily lives because it is precisely "joy" that gives us the power and the catalyst to reach greater heights. Indeed, the *Torah* tells us (*Devarim* 28-47), "Since you didn't serve Hashem with joy and a content heart," terrible calamities befell our nation. Genuine happiness is the antidote against all evil.

He took a closer look at the note and realized that the handwriting was familiar. This was the way his father had always written his name! With trembling hands, he opened the note, which was already tattered and yellowing. These were the words he read inside: “*Ribono Shel Olam!* Have pity on Meshulam ben Rivka, my young son who traveled to India two months ago. Watch over him so that he remains a faithful Jew and forgive him for all of his sins. If I could, I would tell him, My Meshulam, I love you and I forgive you for everything you did. It is true that when we parted, I was very angry at you, and I said that I would never forgive you, but you should know, my dear son, that I have changed my mind, and I do forgive you. I hope and pray to our Father in Heaven that He forgives you as well, and draws you back to Him in complete *teshuvah*. I hope that when the day comes, you will marry a G-d-Fearing Jewish girl, and you will merit to raise holy, pure children to a life of *Torah* and *mitzvos*. Your father who loves you dearly, Yaakov ben Sarah.”

Now, the floodgates opened in Meshulam’s heart, and he cried his heart out, like a young child. When he left the *Kosel* several hours later, he was a complete *Baal teshuvah*. Today, R’ Zilberstein concludes in his *sefer*, Reb Meshulam has four beautiful children, who are following in the ways of the *Torah*.

בבקרית רועה עדרו מעביר צאנו תחת שבטנו כן תעביר ותספור ותמנה ותפקוד נפש כל חי ... (סדר נתנה תקף במסוף ראש השנה)

For the better part of thirty years Reb Gershon was a permanent fixture at the entrance to the private quarters of **R’ Tzvi Hirsch Spira ז”ל**, the **Munkatcher Rebbe**, devotedly serving as his *Shamash*, supervising the *Rebbe’s* comings and goings from daybreak to late night, day in and day out, season after season. He and his wife had no children and lived near the outskirts of the city from where he made his way to the *Rebbe’s* residence early each morning.

And then one day Reb Gershon, a man of wide build and few words, was simply not there anymore. The towering figure had vanished from his *Shamash* post like a piece of furniture gone missing. Prior to his sudden disappearance, Reb Gershon had been absent only when the *Rebbe* had personally summoned him inside. With honed intuition, he knew precisely when the *Rebbe* could be seen and when he needed to be left alone. But now, out of the blue, another man stood in Reb Gershon’s place.

Reb Gershon could later be spotted in the *Beis Medrash* walking its floors to and fro, occasionally settling into a corner to learn some *Torah* before resuming his pacing. Anyone daring to inquire of Reb Gershon about his sudden departure from the *Rebbe’s* court would be met with silence. On one occasion, a revered elder took up stride alongside Reb Gershon in the *Beis Medrash*, the two quietly walking in step together until Reb Gershon stopped in his tracks, faced the elder squarely and said, “Since I am no longer the *Rebbe’s Shamash*, it would appear that this is the way it is supposed to be.” No one brought the matter up to him again.

Many years later, when R’ Tzvi Hirsch returned his pure soul to its Maker, his son and successor, **R’ Chaim Elazar Spira ז”ל**, renowned for his *sefer Minchas Elazar*, took over the mantle of leadership. Still recognized by his statuesque build, though the black of his beard had by now turned starkly white, Reb Gershon was one among the many thousands who would flock to the home of the new *Rebbe* for advice, counsel and blessings. To the older *Chassidim*, Reb Gershon was cloaked in a veil of secrecy that still piqued their curiosity. In fact, the mystery surrounding Reb Gershon inevitably made its way into the many stories exchanged among the *Munkatcher Chassidim* about their previous *Rebbe*. One night, following a day of fasting and devout praying by countless followers who had converged on the court of the *Minchas Elazar* a small crowd of *Chassidim* gathered in a corner of the *Beis Medrash*. They partook of a *L’chayim* and shared feelings of contentment, trading Chassidic narratives and anecdotes. Absorbed in one another and infused by the warmth of the atmosphere, they failed to notice Reb Gershon taking a seat at the edge of their table. When they spotted him, it was with a certain degree of incredulity - for all these years he had steadfastly kept to himself. As Reb Gershon sipped the *schnapps* he was offered, he felt himself become totally at ease. The years seemed to melt away.

As if in a trance, he suddenly began to speak without focusing on anyone, as the others at the table huddled closer together so as not to miss a single word. “Thirty years I served the *tzaddik*, as thousands upon thousands stepped over the threshold. They came for advice and guidance from near and far - the weary, the heavyhearted. Thirty years.”

As Reb Gershon gripped his glass, the wide-eyed listeners held their collective breath, waiting for more. “Among them was a woman, obviously well-to-do, who would arrive in a horse-drawn carriage. She’d step into the antechamber and anxiously ask for a private audience with the *tzaddik*. Inside she would break down with great heaving sobs, barely able to get her words out. ‘*Rebbe*, I have no children,’ she would cry pitifully. ‘Please pray for me. I would give anything; no amount is too steep!’

“But the *Rebbe* ever moved. It was as if the *tzaddik* didn’t see her standing there. With a defeated demeanor, she would be escorted out of the room. This scene would repeat itself every couple of months. And who could know her pain better than I, being childless myself? Her anguished cries would rip into my innards, and yet the *tzaddik* remained unresponsive.”

Reb Gershon sighed heavily, as though the events were just unfolding. “Once, as I stood by the *tzaddik’s* window, I saw her carriage pulling up. She dashed right past me, before I could stop her. In the *Rebbe’s* room she fell to her knees and

that Avner set out on a raft without no provisions and was never heard from again. There are many lessons we can glean from this powerful story.

R’ Moshe Wolfson says as follows: Usually we find a *remez* in either the *roshei teivos* or the *sofei teivos*. Why here was Avner’s acronym in the middle? He answers that the beginning and end of a person, even a *rasha* is unknown as

they can always repent. But at this point in time, based on his *matzav* and actions, it was “אשכיתנה מאונש” - deserving of being banished. But one’s end is not known, as every *yid* has the ability to do *teshuva*.

Yehi ratzon that we all do a proper *teshuva* finding *chein* in *Hashem’s* eyes, and be sealed for a *gittit*, *zeesah yuhr*, full of *besuros tovos*, *yeshuos*, *refuos*, *parnassa* and *nachas*.

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

תשובה תפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה ... (סדר מסוף לר"ה)

The following story is told by **R’ Yitzchok Zilberstein *shlita*** in his *sefer*, **Aleinu L’shabeiach**. Meshulam was a star pupil in his *cheder*, and his parents had enormous *nachas* from him. Unfortunately, Meshulam’s spiritual descent began at age 17, when his mother passed away. One day, he informed his father that he was taking a trip to India together with a few friends. His father was heartbroken, and his anguish over Meshulam’s spiritual deterioration compounded the grief he felt over the loss of his wife. “Meshulam,” he said in a defeated voice, “what does a *frum bachur* have to do in India?”

Meshulam laughed cynically. “Do you think I’m still *frum*? I’m looking to find meaning in life elsewhere.”

His father could not believe his ears. He had known that Meshulam was wavering, but never thought he had deteriorated to this level. Meshulam, for his part, was unmoved by his father’s distress. “I hope you’ll forgive me,” he said impassively.

His father’s face reddened in fury. “Forgive you? After everything I did for you? After the *chinuch* that your mother worked so hard to give you? That’s how you say thank you? I’m done with you! If you throw away everything that’s important to a Jew, you’re no longer my son. I will never forgive you!” These were the last words Meshulam heard his father say.

Three years passed. Meshulam did whatever he pleased while in India. But his trip was marred by the nagging memory of his wrenching parting with his father. Since that time, he had tried calling his father on the phone dozens of times, but his father had not answered, nor had he responded to Meshulam’s letters. One day, as Meshulam was traveling through a city in India and shopping at the local market, he met an old friend from New York who had been in *cheder* with him.

The two enjoyed a warm reunion, reminiscing about old times and exchanging experiences. At some point during the conversation, the friend’s face took on a serious expression, and he said, “Meshulam, I am very sorry about your father.”

“My father?” Meshulam asked in confusion. “What happened to him?”

“You mean you don’t know that your father died of a heart attack six months after you left?” the friend asked in disbelief. “They say that he died of a broken heart because you left him and traveled to India. You didn’t know?”

Meshulam felt as though he had been stabbed in the heart. From that moment, something changed in Meshulam. He couldn’t stop crying. Finally, he decided to travel to Israel to pray. His friends made fun of his decision, but he ignored them, and booked the next flight to Israel. When he landed, he headed straight for the *Kosel HaMaaravi*.

On his way, he began to wonder whether he was even worthy of praying at the *Kosel*, after having abandoned Judaism and having caused his father to die of a broken heart. Haltingly, and with deep emotion, he approached the weathered stones of the *Kosel*. He placed his head upon the stones, and his tears blended into the many other tears that had soaked the *Kosel’s* stones before. He cried for his past, for his present, and for his uncertain future. Most of all he cried for having caused his father such pain. How could he ever find forgiveness for his sins? How could he ever forgive himself? His tears flowed unrelentingly.

A person standing near him took note of his distress and suggested that he write what was bothering him on a note, a *kvittel*, and place it between the stones of the *Kosel*. Meshulam liked the idea, and he wrote a note that came from the depths of his heart. “Father, I am here in the holy city of *Yerushalayim*, at the *Kosel HaMaaravi*. If your soul sees me from on high, I ask you to please forgive me! I did not mean to hurt you; it was only my *yetzer hara* that made me act so foolishly. I promise you that I will do complete *teshuvah*, and from now on I will follow the path that you and my mother taught me. Father, can you forgive me? Your son, Meshulam.”

A fresh wave of tears cascaded down Meshulam’s face as he slipped the note into a crack in the *Kosel*, but he did feel much better now. The note fell to the floor, however, and when Meshulam picked it up and tried to put it back into the *Kosel*, it fell down again. As much as he tried to get the note to stay wedged inside the *Kosel*, it would not remain in place.

Meshulam was deeply distressed by what he saw as Heaven’s refusal to accept his *teshuvah*. Again, despair swept over him. In a last-ditch effort, he decided to try to insert the note between the next layer of stones in the *Kosel*. He climbed onto a chair and pushed the mote deep between the stones. This time, to his relief, the note remained in its place. But another note that had been wedged in that same place fell out just as Meshulam was placing his own note there. He picked up the other note to put it back into the *Kosel*, and to his shock, he saw that the word “Meshulam” was written on the outside of the note.