

אלול

הרב בערל וויסברד

The *Chayei Adam (Klal 138)* begins *Hilchos Rosh Hashana* with the *inyanim* of *Chodesh Elul*. He writes the following: “Because of the love that Hashem has for *Klal Yisroel*, He added ways to be *meitiv* to us and commanded us to do *teshuva* any time we commit a *chet*. Even though *teshuva* is effective at all times, the choicest time to do *teshuva* is during *Chodesh Elul*. The reason for this is because the *teshuva* which one does during *Elul* is received by Hashem more than during the rest of the year. This is because the days of *Elul* were established as “*yemei ratzon*” ever since we became a nation. After *Klal Yisroel* sinned with the *Eigel* and the *Luchos* were broken on *Shiva Asar b’Tammuz*, Moshe Rabbeinu went back up to Hashem and davened for the atonement of the nation. Hashem allowed himself to be *mekabel* the *tefilos* of Moshe Rabbeinu on behalf of *Klal Yisroel*. He told Moshe that even though he had broken the first set of *Luchos*, he should carve out a new set of *Luchos* on which Hashem would engrave the *Aseres haDibros* once more. On *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, Moshe went back up to Hashem and waited there until *Yom HaKippurim* for the completion of the *kaparah*. Not only did Hashem tell Moshe to remake the *Luchos* during this *tekufah*, but He also forgave us for *chet haEigel*... It was on the fortieth day that all of *Klal Yisroel* fasted and from there it was established that the 10th of *Tishrei*, *Yom HaKippurim*, should be the day for *selicha*, *mechila*, v’*kaparah* for *Klal Yisroel*. Therefore, every year, not just back then, this *tekufah* reawakens the *rachamim* from Hashem and these forty days are “*yemei ratzon*” annually... Therefore, every single person is *chayiv* to prepare himself for the day on which he stands before Hashem (*Rosh Hashana*) by working on *teshuva* and *tefilla* for thirty days. He must also give his entire focus and all of his feelings towards *Avodas Hashem* during this time. The *remez* for this is **אלול- אני לדודי ודודי לי**. There is also a *remez* from here to give more *tzedaka* during this time: **...ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים**.”

The *Chayei Adam* writes that everyone is obligated to prepare for thirty days. It is not a *midas chassidus* or above the regular standard of expectation. We are *mechuyav* every day to focus all of our heart to *Avodas Hashem*. This means that the entire *tekufah* of *Elul* through *Yom HaKippurim* must be devoted solely to Hashem. This includes everything we do and we must have the *kavana* in the why we do it, to be doing it for Hashem. Our learning, our davening, our going to work, taking care of our family- all of it must be *rak l’Avodas Hashem*. In reality, we should always have this awareness, but at the very least during this *tekufah* we must keep this in mind.

The *sevara* for this is simple. When we don’t have the opportunity to be successful, it’s a *rachmanus*- we try but cannot accomplish. But when we do have the opportunity to be successful, especially in such an important area of complete *teshuva*, we are *mechuyav* to seize it and make the most of it. There is no reason or excuse not to. In fact, if one, *rachmana litzlan*, says he’s not interested in taking this opportunity, then that is the biggest *peshi’a* he can commit. There’s no excuse for someone to say he’s too busy or uninterested in doing *teshuva* when the Ribono Shel Olam, *kaviyachol*, comes to us and says, “I’m here; now is your chance to do *teshuva* for everything.”

We need to take this very seriously. We need to be focused during these forty days *rak ba'Avodas Hashem*, which is very difficult for many people. We must take advantage and realize the truth of the fact that these are *yemei ratzon* and not allow the *yetzer harah* to convince us that it doesn't make any difference and we're not going to do a real *teshuva*. We cannot be sidetracked or become disillusioned, G-d forbid. *Teshuva* is something that the Ribono Shel Olam wants and it is something He enables us to do. *Teshuva* is something we are capable of and it is something we do every single year. Hashem gives us these *yemei ratzon* for specifically that reason, to allow us to do *teshuva* in a more complete and real way.

What is it that we need to do *teshuva* for? [Obviously, we need to do *teshuva* for any *aveiros* which we committed.] Even though it is true that the *Gemara* describes the different levels of *teshuva* in both *Teshuva me'Ahava* and *Teshuva me'Yira* modes, the whole intention of *teshuva* is in order to once again become close to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The *Mabit* says that the definition of *teshuva* is *Kereiva LaShem V'Richuk haChet*, bring ourselves close to Hashem by distancing ourselves from *chet*. He explains that the whole idea of distance from Hashem is imaginary in our own minds. In reality, Hashem is *melo kol ha'aretz kevodo*. Not physically of course, but Hashem's view and awareness of the whole world is constant and never-ceasing. There is nothing that He doesn't know.

When we talk about *Richuk haChet* and bringing ourselves closer to the Ribono Shel Olam, what we really mean is that we need to wake ourselves up to the reality that we never were *rachok* from Hashem. When we committed an *aveira*, it did not push us away from Him because the Ribono Shel Olam is *karov* at all times, as the *pasuk* (*Tehilim* 145: 18) states "*Karov Hashem l'chol kor'av, v'chol asher yikra'uhu b'emes.*" What it means is that we allow ourselves to perceive a distance from Him.

Teshuva requires us to focus on the fact that we were always close to Him, that we always are and that we always will be. Therefore, our *hanhaga* has to be commensurate with this awareness. When we are in the presence of the *Shechina*, we cannot do anything but the *ratzon* of *Hashem Yisborach*. When we stand in front of *anashim chashuvim*, such as *Gedolei Torah*, we don't struggle to hold ourselves back from doing *aveiros*. We don't want to do *chato'im* because we are thinking about much higher and loftier things than doing *aveiros*. We're thinking about *ruchniyus* and how to be *davuk* to the Ribono Shel Olam. Could we even imagine thinking about doing *aveiros* if we were in the presence of Rav Akiva Eiger, Dovid haMelech, Yosef haTzaddik, or Moshe Rabbeinu? *Al achas kama v'kama* when are in front of the *Shechina*.

To the extent that we want to recapture that feeling, of wanting to be *davuk* to Hashem, that is *Teshuva*. *Teshuva* is wanting to become aware of the fact that we are standing in front of the Ribono Shel Olam.

The *Rambam* says in *Mitzvos haKattan* by *Hilchos Teshuva*: "It is one *mitzvas aseh*- for a person to return from his sin in front of Hashem and be *misvadeh*." The *Rambam* doesn't just say that a person has to return from committing the sin, rather he must do so in front of Hashem. The *Teshuva* requires one to be aware of his transgression having taken place before Hashem. A person says, "*Ana Hashem, Chatasi Avisi Poshati Lifanecha...*" That is part and parcel of one's awareness of the full extent of his *chet* and the awareness of what he wants to regain sight of in his *teshuva*-constant cognizance of being in Hashem's presence.

The more a person keeps this in mind and recaptures this awareness, the less his *nisyonos* to do *aveiros* will be. He will feel like doing *aveiros* much less when he feels *mekushar l'Maalah* and *mekushar in ruchniyos*.

This is what we have to try to accomplish in these *yemei ratzon* during *Chodesh Elul* leading up to and including *Yom haKippurim*. *Ani LiDodi ViDodi Li* means consciously knowing that we

are always in the presence of and close to Hashem, and He is close to us. We also accomplish this with *matanos l'evyonim* and through our *Bein Adam liChavero*. These are the *eitzos* that *Chazal* give us to do *teshuva*; to accomplish that which we want in our *avodas Hashem*; to readjust ourselves to fulfill the *tachlis* for which we were created; to be *Ovdei Hashem*. This means that we are aware of the Ribono Shel Olam's presence; aware of His tremendous love of us all; to be able to understand that the whole process of *teshuva* was given to us for this end and to be able to utilize it during these *yemei ratzon* which were specially crafted for it.

B'ezer Hashem Yisborach, accomplishing this will bring a *nachas ruach* to Him and show Him that we really want to do His *ratzon* always. When we take advantage of the best opportunity to do this, that *b'ezer Hashem Yisborach* will be the biggest *zechus* for us as individuals and for *gantz Klal Yisroel*.

We should all be *zoche* to *ישועה וישלום גאולה וישועה*.