NEW

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KI SAVO כי תבא

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

INSIGHTS INTO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Dedicated to

Emmanuel (Mendel) Karp

1905 - 1989

son of Bernard (Berl) and Rose (Rezele)

Manny Karp was born in the United States, in 1905. His first language was Yiddish. Losing his mother to the Spanish Flu shaped his resilience and commitment to helping others, ultimately leading to a career as a guidance counselor in Philadelphia public schools. He also served many years as the director of Camp Akiba in the Poconos.

Karp's legacy is characterized by his optimism and unwavering dedication to learning and mentorship. Emmanuel Karp died in 1989.

KI SAVO I | כי תבא א

Adapted from a letter composed on Elul 6, 5715 (1956)

Introduction

Think for a second: A farmer works the entire year, producing his crops. However, when those crops finally grow, what does he do with the first fruits of his labor? Rather than enjoying them himself, he brings them to the *Beis HaMikdash* as an offering for G-d.

What motivates such a course of action? The realization that it is not "my strength and the power of my hand have made me this wealth,"[1] but rather the fruits he is offering are what "You, G-d, have given me."[2] He recognizes that it is G-d's world, controlled by Him.

What happens next reveals an even deeper truth. Those fruits are not offered and consumed by fire on the Altar, but rather eaten by man. In other words, after we recognize that the world is G-d's, He gives it back to us to use as we see fit.

How much gratitude does this Divine generosity call for!

That is the reason why, while bringing the first fruits in previous times, a Jew would offer a declaration of thanks to G-d for His munificence and blessing. In response to that declaration, a Heavenly voice would resound, blessing him that he should again be able to bring his first fruits to the *Beis HaMikdash* with joy.[3]

Parshas Ki Savo is always read shortly before Rosh HaShanah. We can infer that by recognizing that G-d is the source of the blessings that we enjoyed in the previous year, we will be granted the potential to enjoy similar – indeed even greater – blessings in the year to come.

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1. *Devarim* 8:17.

2. Ibid. 26:10, recited as part of declaration of thanks made by a person bringing *bikkurim.*

3. *Midrash Tanchuma,* the beginning of *Parshas Ki Savo; Rashi, Devarim* 26:16.

When Every Person Becomes a *Kohen*

Two Lessons from the First Fruits

1. This week's Torah reading describes the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim,* "the first fruits," which were to be brought from the finest produce that *Eretz Yisrael*, **our holy land,**[1] **yielded** in the era **when it was a land flowing with milk and honey.** The *bikkurim* were **selected from among the first fruits**[2] of the harvest and were separated **before** the owner **took anything for himself. He would bring these** fruits **to the *Beis HaMikdash* to thank G-d for the blessing that He invested in the earth's produce.** There was a unique dimension to **the *bikkurim*: Unlike other sacrifices that were burned on the altar,** this produce **was given to the *kohen*.**

This teaches us two divergent lessons:

a) **The grain and fruits of the earth grew** only **after** the owner **plowed, sowed, and performed** all **the other labors connected with cultivating this produce.** Even so, despite all his efforts, **he would not take the first and finest** produce **for himself. Instead, he made it holy by giving it to the *kohen*.**

Certainly, it is only natural that, **at times, an objection would be aroused** within the owner's heart: **After all the effort and energy that he had invested in** cultivating **this** produce, he was required to give a portion away. And **even if he had to give a portion of it for**

א. דִי הַיְינְטִיקֶע סֶדְרָה דֶערְצֵיילְט וֶועגְן דֶער מִצְוָה פוּן בְּרֶענְגֶען בִּכּוּרִים, וֶועלְכֶע דַארְף זַיְין פוּן דִי בֶּעסְטֶע פְּרוּכְט וָואס עֶס הָאט אַרוֹיסְגֶעגֶעבְּן אַרְצֵנוּ הַקְדוֹשָׁה, תִּבָּנֶה וְתִכּוֹנֵן בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ עַל יְדֵי מָשִׁיחַ צִדְקֵנוּ, וֶוען זִי אִיז גֶעוֶוען אַן אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ, אוּן פוּן דִי עֶרְשְׁט-צַייְטִיקֶע פֵּירוֹת, אֵיידֶער מֶען הָאט פַאר זִיךְ עֶפֶּעס גֶענוּמֶען פוּן זֵיי, אוּן מֶען הָאט דָאס גֶעבְּרַאכְט אִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, צוּ בַּאדַאנְקֶען הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ פַאר דֶער בְּרָכָה וָואס עֶר בָּרוּךְ הוּא הָאט אַרַיְינְגֶעגֶעבְּן אִין דִי פֵּירוֹת פוּן דֶער עֶרְד. דִי בִּכּוּרִים זַיְינֶען נִיט גֶעוֶוען וִוי אַנְדֶערֶע קָרְבָּנוֹת, צוּ פַארְבְּרֶענֶען אוֹיפְן מִזְבֵּחַ, נָאר אַוֶועקְצוּגֶעבְּן זֵיי דֶעם כֹּהֵן.

פוּן דֶעם לֶערְנֶען מִיר אַרוֹיס, אִין דִי בֵּיידֶע קְצָוות: אַז דִי תְּבוּאָה וּפֵירוֹת הָאָרֶץ, וֶועלְכֶע וַואקְסְן אוֹיס נָאךְ דֶעם וִוי מֶען הָאט גֶעאַקֶערְט אוּן גֶעזֵייט אוּן גֶעטָאן דִי אַנְדֶערֶע מְלָאכוֹת וֶועלְכֶע זַיְינֶען פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיט דָאס וַואקְסְן פוּן פֵּירוֹת הָאָרֶץ, הָאט מֶען דִי עֶרְשְׁטֶע בֶּעסְטֶע פוּן זֵיי, נִיט גֶענוּמֶען פַאר זִיךְ, נָאר גֶעמַאכְט פוּן דֶעם - קְדוּשָּׁה, מִיט דֶעם אַוֶועקְגֶעבְּן עֶס צוּם כֹּהֵן. וָואס גֶעוִויס צַיְיטְנְוַויְיז דֶערְוֶועקְט זִיךְ אַ טַעֲנָה, אַז נָאךְ דֶער גַאנְצֶער הָארֶעוַואנְיֶע אוּן מִי וָואס מֶען הָאט אַרַיְינְגֶעלֵייגְט אִין דֶעם, אִיז אוֹיבּ אֲפִילוּ מֶען דַארְף אַוֶועקְגֶעבְּן אַ

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1. In the original, the Rebbe adds the prayer traditionally mentioned when referring to *Eretz Yisrael,* **"May it be rebuilt and established speedily in our days through our righteous *Mashiach.*"**

2. I.e., the first fruits that ripened, not the first fruits harvested. As *Rambam* (*Hilchos Bikkurim* 2:19) writes, "A person descends to his field, sees a fig tree, a cluster of grapes, and/or a pomegranate tree that has budded, and ties them with a reed. He [then] should say: 'These are the first fruits.'"

holy purposes, why did it have to come specifically from the finest and most beautiful?

However, deeper reflection leads to the understanding that such a complaint can only arise when a person lacks the faith that the earth's produce is what "You have given me, G-d,"[3] **but,** instead, **thinks that "my strength and the power of my hand have made me this success."**[4] **After contemplating** the situation, **he sees that such thoughts are the** very **opposite of the simple faith that every Jew, without exception, possesses. All that is necessary is to bring this** faith **to the surface so that it will also affect his everyday life.**

b) **The second lesson we learn from this *mitzvah* comes from the fact that the fruits were not burned on the altar in the *Beis HaMikdash*. Instead, they were given to a *kohen*,** who was to **use them** by **eating** them **or the like, as is the law regarding *bikkurim*.** This teaches that **even the taste** and **pleasure derived from physical** entities can be used for a holy purpose. **When a** person **sanctifies and prepares himself properly,** dedicating himself to G-d with a full heart, **he becomes a *kohen*** in a figurative sense.[5] Accordingly, **he can use** material entities **for holiness by engaging in** a spiritual parallel to **bringing them into the *Beis HaMikdash*.** He can **serve G-d by eating the fruits, just as he serves G-d with other sacrifices – a burnt offering and the like –** which were **consumed by fire in the *Beis HaMikdash*.**

This is one of the fundamental principles of the teachings of *Chassidus*: A person can serve – and must serve – G-d not only during prayer and Torah study, but also while eating and through eating, and while conducting business

טֵייל פוּן דֶעם אוֹיף הֵיילִיקֶע צְוֶועקְן, אִיז פַּארְוָואס דַארְף דָאס זַיְין דַוְקָא פוּן דִי בֶּעסְטֶע אוּן שֶׁענְסְטֶע? אָבֶּער וֶוען מֶען טְרַאכְט זִיךְ אַרַיְין אִין דֶעם - קוּמְט מֶען צוּ דֶעם פַארְשְׁטַאנְד, אַז דִי טַעֲנָה קֶען זַיְין נָאר, וֶוען עֶס פֶעלְט דִי אֱמוּנָה אַז דִי פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אִיז - נָתַתָּ לִּי ה׳, אוּן מֶען מֵיינְט אַז כֹּחִי וְעֹצֶם יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחַיִל הַזֶּה[א]. אָבֶּער נָאכְן אַרַיְינְטְרַאכְטְן - זֶעט מֶען אַז דָאס אִיז הֵיפֶּךְ פוּן אֱמוּנָה פְּשׁוּטָה, וָואס דִי אֱמוּנָה פְּשׁוּטָה אִיז פַארַאן בַּיי אַלֶע אִידְן אָן אוֹיסְנַאם, מֶען דַארְף זִי נָאר אַרוֹיסְבְּרֶענְגֶען אַז זִי זָאל אוֹיךְ ווִירְקְן אִין דֶעם טָאג־טֶעגְלֶעכְן לֶעבְּן.

אַ צְווֵייטֶע זַאךְ לֶערְנֶען מִיר פוּן דֶער זֶעלְבֶּער מִצְוָה, פוּן דֶעם וָואס דִי פֵּירוֹת ווֶערְן נִיט פַארְבְּרֶענְט אוֹיפְן מִזְבֵּחַ אִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, נָאר זֵיי ווֶערְן אַוֶועקְגֶעגֶעבְּן צוּם כֹּהֵן, ווֶעלְכֶער דַארְף זֵיי נוּצְן: עֶסְן אוּן אַזוֹי ווַיְיטֶער - ווִי דֶער דִין פוּן בִּכּוּרִים. - אַז אֲפִילוּ דֶער טַעַם׳דִיקֶער גֶעשְׁמַאק אִין גַשְׁמִיּוּת, אוֹיב מֶען גְרֵייט זִיךְ צוּ ווִי גֶעהֶערִיק אוּן מֶען הֵיילִיקְט זִיךְ, מֶען ווֶערְט אַ "כֹּהֵן" - קֶען מֶען דָאס אוֹיסְנִיצְן אִין קְדוּשָּׁה (דוּרְךְ בְּרֶענְגֶען אִין דֶעם בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וכו׳), אוּן דִינֶען הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ דוּרְךְ עֶסְן דִי פֵּירוֹת, אָט אַזוֹי ווִי מֶען דִינְט הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ מִיט אַנְדֶערֶע קָרְבָּנוֹת דוּרְכְן פַארְבְּרֶענֶען זֵיי אִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, ווִי אַ קָרְבַּן עוֹלָה אוּן עֶנְלֶעכֶעס.

אוּן דָאס אִיז אֵיינֶע פוּן דִי יְסוֹדוֹת תּוֹרַת הַחֲסִידוּת, אַז מֶען קֶען דִינֶען אוּן מֶען דַארְף דִינֶען הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ, נִיט נָאר בְּעֵת אוּן דוּרְךְ דַאווְנֶען אוּן בְּעֵת אוּן דוּרְךְ לֶערְנֶען תּוֹרָה, נָאר אוֹיךְ בְּשַׁעַת עֶסְן אוּן מִיטְן עֶסְן, בְּשַׁעַת דֶעם טָאן

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3. *Devarim* 26:10, recited as part of declaration of thanks made by a person bringing *bikkurim*.

4. **Ibid. 8:17. *Sefer Mitzvos Gadol,* negative commandment 64, considers** entertaining such thoughts **as one of the** 365 **Scriptural prohibitions.**

5. See *Rambam,* the conclusion of *Hilchos Shemitah VeYoval.*

and through the business itself. However, **it is self-evident that this form of serving G-d requires** more and **deeper preparation and,** consequently, **the reward for it is** commensurately **greater.**

In this sense, the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* exists even in the time of exile and even outside *Eretz Yisrael*, and also on an ordinary weekday. When one expresses gratitude **from the depths of his heart for everything he has,** recognizing **that this is what "You have given me, G-d," it becomes sanctified.** The material entities undergo a transformation; they become holy, **to the extent that using them can become an element of Divine service.**

When the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* was observed **in its literal sense in the *Beis HaMikdash*, it would bring forth a blessing** from Heaven: "As you have brought the first fruits today, [**so**] **may you** bring them **again next year!"**[6] This blessing also included an assurance that **the *mitzvah* would be fulfilled with satisfaction and joy,** as the Torah promises,[7] "Then, you shall rejoice with all the good that G-d, your L-rd, has granted you and your household."

Similarly, at present, using the possessions that G-d gives in the way He demands brings G-d's blessing, enabling us to fulfill this service **in the coming year as well, but in a much greater measure – and with even more happiness and joy – since we must always ascend** to loftier levels **of holiness.**[8]

עֵסֶק - בִּיזְנֶעס - אוּן מִיט דֶעם עֵסֶק. עֶס אִיז נָאר, זֶעלְבְּסְטְפַארְשְׁטֶענְדְלֶעךְ, אַז דֶער אַנְדֶער פַּאל פוּן דִינֶען הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ פָּאדֶערְט אַ טִיפֶערֶע צוּגְרֵייטוּנְג צוּ דֶעם, אוּן דֶער שְׂכַר פוּן דֶעם אִיז גְרֶעסֶער.

אוּן אִין דֶעם זִין, אִיז דִי מִצְוָה פוּן בִּכּוּרִים דָא אֲפִילוּ בִּזְמַן הַגָּלוּת אוּן אֲפִילוּ בְּחוּץ לָאָרֶץ, אוּן אוֹיךְ אִין אַ פָּשׁוּט'ן וָואכֶעדִיקְן טָאג, אַז וֶוען מֶען זָאגְט פוּן טִיפְן הַארְצְן אוֹיף אַלְץ וָואס מֶען הָאט, אַז דָאס אִיז נָתַתָּ לִּי ה', וֶוערְט דָאס גֶעהֵייליקְט, בִּיז אַז דָאס נִיצְן דָאס - קֶען וֶוערְן אַן עֲבוֹדָה, עֲבוֹדַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ.

בַּיי דֶער מִצְוָה פוּן בִּכּוּרִים כִּפְשׁוּטָה, וֶוען דָאס אִיז גֶעוֶוען בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, אִיז דָאךְ דֶערְנָאךְ גֶעוֶוען דִי בְּרָכָה[ו] אַז לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה זָאל עֶר נָאכַאמָאל מְקַיֵּים זַיְין דִי מִצְוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה[ז], אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ הַיְינְט, דָאס בַּאנוּצְן אוּן אוֹיסְנִיצְן דִי נְכָסִים - אֵייגְנְטוּם - וָואס הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ גִיט, ווִי הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ פַארְלַאנְגְט, בְּרֶענְגְט דִי בְּרָכָה פוּן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ, אַז אוֹיךְ לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה זָאל מֶען דָאס קֶענֶען מְקַיֵּים זַיְין אוּן אִין אַ פִיל גְרֶעסֶערֶער מָאס, אוּן מִיט נָאךְ מֶער צוּפְרִידְנְקַיְיט אוּן שִׂמְחָה, וָוארוּם עֶס דַארְף דָאךְ זַיְין - מַעֲלִין בַּקֹּדֶשׁ[ח].

(ע"פ מכתב ו' אלול תשט"ו)

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6. *Midrash Tanchuma,* **the beginning of *Parshas Ki Savo; Rashi, Devarim* 26:16.**

7. ***Devarim* 26:11.** Note **our Sages'** (*Arachin* 11a, *Pesachim* 36b) **interpretation of this verse. Based on *Rambam's* (*Hilchos Maaser Sheni,* ch. 11,** the end of ***halachah*** 15)* citation of the verse and its interpretation, the implication is that not only **should a person rejoice,** but he should **also share his rejoicing with others.** Thus, the Heavenly promise to fulfill the *mitzvah* with joy the following year implies that the person will be granted blessings ample enough to bring happiness to others as well.

* Although the verse *Rambam* cites concerns *Maaser Sheni,* the verse itself is part of the declaration made when bringing the first fruits.

8. ***Menachos* 99a.**

א) דברים ח, יז. דער סמ״ג (מצות לא תעשה סד) רעכנט עס אין די מצות לא תעשה מן התורה.

ב) תנחומא ריש פרשת תבוא. רש״י תבוא כו, טז.

ג) דברים כו, יא ובדרשת רז״ל על הפסוק. ועל פי מה שכתוב ברמב״ם הלכות מעשר שני פרק יא הלכה טו בסופה, מובן שצריך להיות שמחתי ושימחתי (גם אחרים) בו.

ד) מנחות צט, א.

KI SAVO II | כי תבא ב

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim,* 5714 (1954)

Introduction

The Alter Rebbe himself would serve as the Torah reader in his synagogue. Once he was not in Liozna for *Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo*, and his son, the future Mitteler Rebbe — at that time a boy before *bar mitzvah* – heard the Torah reading from another person. He experienced such distress upon hearing the curses in the *tocheichah*[1] that the Alter Rebbe was unsure whether his son would be able to fast on Yom Kippur.[2]

When the future Mitteler Rebbe was asked to explain the severity of his response – after all, this same passage is read every year – he replied, "When my father reads it, they do not sound like curses."[3]

This response reveals a profound truth: what appears to be Divine punishment is actually Divine blessing in disguise.[4] The *tocheichah* serves not to threaten, but to prepare us to purify our souls so that we can receive the extraordinary flow of Divine goodness that descends on Rosh HaShanah.

There is a parable offered by the Alter Rebbe[5] that illustrates this process: When a merciful king washes the filth from his beloved son, the child may feel pain and cry out. The son's pain – like the anguish caused by the consequences mentioned in the *tocheichah* – is real and should not be minimized. However, everyone understands that this cleansing is entirely for the son's welfare. So, too, the temporary discomfort of hearing the *tocheichah* cleanses us and prepares us to receive G-d's gifts, promising a year of blessing and goodness, far greater than anything we could imagine.

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1. The series of curses detailed in *Parshas Ki Savo* (*Devarim,* ch. 28) that will be visited on the Jewish people for failing to observe the commandments of the Torah.

2. Some three weeks later.

3. Indeed, in some of the verses of retribution, the Alter Rebbe perceives a mystical allusion that transforms their harsh message into actual blessings. (See *Likkutei Torah, Bechukosai,* p. 48a.)

4. See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 1, p. 283ff., where the Rebbe elaborates on this theme

5. *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 22.

The Price of Revelation

A Brief Moment of Discomfort

1. Before Rosh HaShanah,[1] and similarly before Shavuos, we read the *tocheichah* (literally, "rebuke"), a description of the punishments that would be visited upon the Jewish people if they fail to adhere to G-d's commandments. **Before Shavuos,** they are read in ***Parshas Bechukosai*****, and before Rosh HaShanah,** in ***Parshas Ki Savo*****. However, after the Torah reading** containing the *tocheichah*, **we read another Torah reading – before Shavuos, *Parshas Bamidbar*, and sometimes also *Parshas Naso*, and before Rosh HaShanah, *Parshas Nitzavim*, and sometimes also *Parshas Vayeilech* – to** follow **the *tocheichah*** and **intervene between the rebuke and the festival.**

The reason for this is that the purpose of reading the ***tocheichah* is not** to recount **punishments,[2] but to purify and refine** the Jewish people, so that they become an appropriate **vessel** for G-d's blessings. **Therefore, we read** the *tocheichah* **before Shavuos and Rosh HaShanah.**

By way of analogy: **Before placing a very precious and important article into a vessel, one must first cleanse the vessel – borrowing the language of the Talmud,[3] "cause its curses to cease." Similarly, regarding spiritual matters,** the vessel receiving the blessing must first be cleansed and purified.

Therefore, before the revelations of the Giving of the Torah on Shavuos **and before the revelations**

א. פַאר ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה[1], אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ פַאר שָׁבוּעוֹת, לֵייעֶנְט מֶען דִי תּוֹכָחָה. פַאר שָׁבוּעוֹת - פַּרְשַׁת בְּחֻקֹּתַי, אוּן פַאר ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה - פַּרְשַׁת תָּבוֹא. נָאר נָאךְ דֶער סֶדְרָה לֵייעֶנְט מֶען נָאךְ אַ סֶדְרָה, פַאר שָׁבוּעוֹת - פַּרְשַׁת בַּמִּדְבָּר, אוּן אַמָאל אוֹיךְ פַּרְשַׁת נָשֹׂא, אוּן פַאר ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה - פַּרְשַׁת נִצָּבִים, אוּן אַמָאל אוֹיךְ פַּרְשַׁת וַיֵּלֶךְ, בִּכְדֵי צוּ מַפְסִיק זַיְין צְווִישְׁן דֶער תּוֹכָחָה מִיטְן יוֹם טוֹב.

דֶער טַעַם אוֹיף דֶעם אִיז, וַוײַלֶע דִי תּוֹכָחָה אִיז נִיט קֵיין עִנְיָן פוּן עוֹנְשִׁים חַס וְשָׁלוֹם[2], נָאר אַן עִנְיָן פוּן טַהֲרַת וְזִיכּוּךְ הַכְּלִי, אוּן דֶערְפַאר לֵייעֶנְט מֶען עֶס פַאר שָׁבוּעוֹת אוּן ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וַוײַלֶע אַזוֹי וִוי אִין גַּשְׁמִיּוּת אִיז אֵיידֶער מֶען לֵייגְט אַרַיְין אִין אַ כְּלִי אַ זֵייעֶר טַיְיעֶרֶע אוּן חָשׁוּב'עֶ זַאךְ, מוּז מֶען פְרִיעֶר דִי כְּלִי אוֹיסְוַואשְׁן, מְכַלֶּה זַיְין קִלְלוֹתֶיהָ - כִּלְשׁוֹן הַשַּׁ"ס[3] - אַזוֹי אִיז אוֹיךְ אִין רוּחְנִיּוּת.

דֶערְפַאר אִיז פַאר דִי גִילּוּיִים פוּן מַתַּן תּוֹרָה אוּן פַאר דִי גִילּוּיִים

1. *Megilah* 31b. **Regarding the statements of *Tosafos,*** s.v. *kelalos,* **note** the explanation given **in *Maharsha's Chidushei Agados* on that source.**

2. **See** the explanations in ***Likkutei Torah, Vayikra,* p. 48aff,** that, indeed, the curses are lofty blessings which, due to their superior nature, could not be revealed in a direct manner.

In the unedited text of the talks of the *sichos* that the Rebbe delivered at the *farbrengen,* he said, "Our Sages (see *Menachos* 110a) teach, 'Whoever studies the laws of a burnt offering is considered as if he brought a burnt offering.' Similarly in this instance, by hearing the curses of the *tocheichah*, it will be considered as if we will have undergone the same refinement which would be brought about by the *tocheichah.*"

3. ***Megilah* 31b.** The wording of the passage is "so that the year and its curses will cease."

of Rosh HaShanah, the vessel – the Jewish people – must undergo purification.

To focus on Rosh HaShanah:[4] **Each Rosh HaShanah draws down a new flow of Divine** light and **energy that never existed previously.**[5] **Even when the *Beis HaMikdash* existed, such a flow** of Divine light **had not yet been drawn down. To be able to receive this** greater **flow of Divine** light and **energy, the vessel must first be purified.** This is why the *tocheichah* is read.

To bring about this cleansing, **suffering may be required for a short while.** Such suffering is felt even more acutely by **the child of a king, and even more so if he is an only child.**[6] (The analogy is appropriate because **every Jew is an only child of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.) As such, even the slightest** discomfort **is unbearable for him. For this reason, as mentioned above, we intervene with another Torah reading** to enter the festival with an uplifted and joyous mindset.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile for our Merciful Father[7] to subject the Jews, His children, to **brief moments** of unpleasantness **for the sake of the precious gift that He will give them.**

פוּן ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וואָס יֶעדער ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה ווערט נִמְשָׁךְ אַ הַמְשָׁכָה חֲדָשָׁה שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה מֵעוֹלָם[ח], דאָס הייסט אַז אֲפִילוּ בִּזְמַן שֶׁבֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הָיָה קַיָּם איז נאָךְ נִיט געווען אַזאַ הַמְשָׁכָה, איז בִּכְדֵי צוּ מְקַבֵּל זיין די הַמְשָׁכָה, - מוּז זיין פְרִיער טַהֲרַת הַכְּלִי.

דאָס הייסט אַז נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק אויף דעם וואָס אויף אַ קוּרְצֶער ווײַלע עַל כָּל פָּנִים, זיינען דאָס יִסוּרִים, אוּן בִּפְרַט בַּיי אַ בֶּן מֶלֶךְ, אוּן דערצוּ נאָךְ אַ בֵּן יָחִיד (וואָס אַלע אִידְן זיינען בָּנִים יְחִידִים שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא) איז דאָךְ נאָר עֶפֶּעס אַ קְלֵיינִיקַייט וואָס איז נִיט אַזוֹי, קען ער שוֹין נִיט אִיבֶּערְטְרָאגְן (אוּן דערפַאר איז מען מַפְסִיק אַ סֶדְרָה, כַּנַ״ל), פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן איז כְּדַאי בַּיי אָבִינוּ אָב הָרַחֲמָן, אוּן אֲפִילוּ בַּיי אָב הָרַחֲמִים[ט], אַז לְשָׁעָה קַלָּה זאָל זיין נִיט אַזוֹי, צוּלִיב דער טַייְעֶרער זאַךְ וואָס ער וועט גֶעבְּן.

The Mathematics of Redemption

2. Among **the differences between the *tocheichah* of *Parshas Bechukosai*, which we read before Shavuos, and the *tocheichah* of *Parshas Ki Savo*, which we read before Rosh HaShanah, is this: The *tocheichah* of *Parshas Bechukosai* contains 49 curses, while *Parshas Ki Savo* contains 98, twice as many.**

ב. דער חִילוּק פוּן דער תּוֹכָחָה פוּן פַּרְשַׁת בְּחֻקֹּתַי, וואָס מען לייעֶנְט פַאר שָׁבוּעוֹת, אוּן דער תּוֹכָחָה פוּן פַּרְשַׁת תָּבוֹא, וואָס מען לייעֶנְט פַאר ראֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, איז, אַז אִין דער תּוֹכָחָה פוּן פַּרְשַׁת בְּחֻקֹּתַי זיינען דאָ מ״ט קְלָלוֹת, אוּן אִין פַּרְשַׁת תָּבוֹא, צ״ח. צְווֵיי מאָל אַזוֹי פִיל.

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4. Although initially the Rebbe mentioned both Shavuos and Rosh HaShanah, the focus of this *sichah* is on Rosh HaShanah. However, this concept applies to Shavuos as well, since each year G-d gives the Torah anew on an even loftier level than in previous years.

5. ***Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 14.**

6. See *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 22, which speaks about a king washing the filth of his cherished son.

7. In the original, the Rebbe uses two terms to describe G-d as "our Merciful Father" – **אבינו אב הרחמן** and **אב הרחמים**, literally, "the Father of Mercy." **The second term refers to a loftier level. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim,* p. 62d, *Shir HaShirim,* p. 10c.**

וָואס פוּן דֶעם אִיז פַארְשְׁטַאנְדִיק אַז דִי גִילוּיִים פוּן רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה זַיְינֶען הֶעכֶערֶע וִוי דִי גִילוּיִים פוּן שָׁבוּעוֹת, וָואס דֶערְפַאר פָּאדֶערְט זִיךְ אוֹיךְ אַ גְרֶעסֶערֶע טַהֲרָה.

דִי עֲבוֹדָה אוּן גִילוּיִים פוּן שָׁבוּעוֹת זַיְינֶען בְּדֶרֶךְ אוֹר יָשָׁר, מִלְמַעְלָה לְמַטָּה. וִוי דִי גְמָרָא זָאגְט אוֹיף מַתַּן תּוֹרָה אַז עֶס אִיז גֶעוֶוען אַן עִנְיָן פוּן גֵירוּת', וְגֵר שֶׁנִּתְגַּיֵּיר כְּקָטָן שֶׁנּוֹלַד דָּמִי'א. אָבֶּער דִי עֲבוֹדָה אוּן גִילוּיִים פוּן תִּשְׁרֵי זַיְינֶען תְּשׁוּבָה, אוֹר חוֹזֵר, מִלְּמַטָּה לְמַעְלָה. דֶערְפַאר אִיז אוֹיךְ תִּשְׁרֵי מִיט סֵדֶר ת, ש, ר, וָואס דָאס אִיז אַ סֵדֶר מִלְּמַטָּה לְמַעְלָה.

דֶערְפַאר אִיז אוֹיךְ דִי הֲכָנָה צוּ שָׁבוּעוֹת, דִי עֲבוֹדָה פוּן נִיסָן אִיָּיר אוּן הַתְחָלַת סִיוָן, וָואס דָאס אִיז עֲבוֹדַת הַצַּדִּיקִים, דּוֹדִי לִי וַאֲנִי לוֹ, מִלְמַעְלָה לְמַטָּה. אוּן דִי הֲכָנָה צוּ רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה אִיז דִי עֲבוֹדָה פוּן חֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל, עֲבוֹדַת בַּעֲלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה, אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי אוּן דֶערְנָאךְ וְדוֹדִי לִי, מִלְּמַטָּה לְמַעְלָה.

דִי גִילוּיִים פוּן אוֹר חוֹזֵר זַיְינֶען הֶעכֶער וִוי דִי גִילוּיִים פוּן אוֹר יָשָׁר. וִוי עֶס אִיז בַּאוואוּסְט'ב דִי מַעֲלָה פוּן בַּעֲלֵי

The fact that the cleansing process that enables us to receive the revelation of Rosh HaShanah is lengthier and more intense **indicates that the revelations of Rosh HaShanah are loftier than the revelations of Shavuos. For this reason, Rosh HaShanah requires greater** preparatory **purification.**

The Divine service and revelations of Shavuos follow the path of *or yashar* ("direct light"), light that shines **from Above to below. The Talmud thus describes the Giving of the Torah as resembling conversion[8] and states, "A convert who converts is like a newborn child."[9] By contrast, the Divine service and revelations of Tishrei are** characterized by ***teshuvah*, *or chozer* ("rebounding light"),** light that the Jewish people evoke through their Divine service **from below to Above. This is why Tishrei follows the order of the letters ת, ש, ר,[10] which represents a sequence from below to Above.**

Two verses in *Shir HaShirim* ("The Song of Songs") describe the love relationship between G-d and the Jewish people: *Dodi li va'ani lo* ("My Beloved is mine and I am His")[11] and *Ani l'Dodi viDodi li*" ("I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine").[12] **The preparation for Shavuos involves the Divine service of** the months of **Nissan, Iyar, and the beginning of Sivan. This follows** the pattern of **the Divine service of *tzadikim*: "My Beloved is mine and I am His"** – as a result of the revelations **from Above** ("My Beloved is mine") **to below**, the Jewish people respond ("I am His"). By contrast, **the preparation for Rosh HaShanah is the Divine service of the month of Elul, the Divine service of *baalei teshuvah*.** Here, the pattern is reversed – the initial step, ascending **from below upward,** is taken by the Jewish people, **"I am my Beloved's."** Only **afterwards** are they granted the revelations from Above, **"my Beloved is mine."**[13]

The revelations of *or chozer* are loftier than the revelations of *or yashar*. Thus, **as is well known,[14] *baalei***

8. **See *Yevamos* 46b.**

9. **Ibid. 22a; see the sources cited there.**

10. The Rebbe is mentioning the last three letters of the Hebrew alphabet in reverse order.

11. *Shir HaShirim* 2:16.

12. Ibid. 6:3.

13. This concept is highlighted by the fact that the first letters of the verse, **אני לדודי ודודי לי** ("I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine") serve as an acronym for the name Elul, the month of preparation for Rosh HaShanah.

14. ***Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:3. See *Sefer HaMaamarim 5709,* p. 183, footnote 1.**

teshuvah possess an **advantage over *tzadikim*. We also see this concept manifest regarding the Tablets** of the Ten Commandments. **The second Tablets, which were given on the day after Yom Kippur, after** the Jews repented for **the sin of the Golden Calf, were loftier than the first Tablets, which were given in the month of Sivan. Our Sages[15] applied the expression *kiflayim l'tushiyah* ("a double measure of understanding"), twice as much.[16] Based on this** motif, it is understood why **the purification of the vessel before Rosh HaShanah is also double.**

This same pattern applies to exile and redemption, whose causes are sin and *teshuvah* respectively. **The root of exile is the sin of the Golden Calf. Regarding exile, it is written, *Laksa b'chiflayim*** **("She has received twofold punishment"),[17] for *chat'ah b'chiflayim* ("she has sinned double") regarding the sin that caused exile. Through this process, we will reach the Ultimate Redemption, which is *nechamah b'chiflayim* ("double comfort"), as it is written,[18] *Nachamu nachamu* *ami*** **("Take comfort, take comfort,** My people").**[19]**

תְּשׁוּבָה אוֹיף צַדִּיקִים. אַזוֹי זֶעט מֶען אוֹיךְ אִין דִי לוּחוֹת, אַז דִי לוּחוֹת הַשְּׁנִיּוֹת וָואס זַיְינֶען גֶעגֶעבְּן גֶעוָוארְן נָאכְן חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל בְּמָחֳרַת יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים זַיְינֶען הֶעכֶער פוּן דִי לוּחוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת וָועלְכֶע זַיְינֶען גֶעגֶעבְּן גֶעוָוארְן בְּחֹדֶשׁ סִיוָן. אוּן דֶער לָשׁוֹן אִיז[יג] כִּפְלַיִם לְתוּשִׁיָּה, צְווֵיי מָאל אַזוֹי פִיל. דֶערְפַאר אִיז אוֹיךְ דִי טַהֲרַת הַכְּלִי וָואס פַאר רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, אַ צְווֵייעֶנְדִיקֶע.

אַזוֹי אִיז אוֹיךְ אִין דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן גָלוּת אוּן גְאוּלָה וָואס זֵייעֶר סִיבָּה אִיז דָאךְ חֵטְא אוּן תְּשׁוּבָה. דֶער שֹׁרֶשׁ פוּן גָלוּת אִיז דֶער חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל, שְׁטֵייט אוֹיפְן גָלוּת לָקְתָה בְּכִפְלַיִם, אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ אוֹיפְן חֵטְא וָואס דָאס אִיז דִי סִיבָּה פוּן גָלוּת שְׁטֵייט חָטְאָה בְּכִפְלַיִם, וָואס דוּרְךְ דֶעם וֶועט מֶען צוּקוּמֶען צוּ דֶער גְאוּלָה וָואס זִי אִיז נֶחָמָה בְּכִפְלַיִם, וִוי עֶס שְׁטֵייט נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ[יד].

(משיחות ש"פ נצבים, תשי"ד)

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15. *Iyov* 11:6; ***Shmos Rabbah* 46:1.**

16. As *Shmos Rabbah,* loc. cit., explains: "The First Tablets contained only the Ten Commandments, the Second Tablet contained *halachos* ("Torah law"), Midrash, and *Aggados.*"

17. See *Yeshayahu* 40:2.

18. *Yeshayahu* 40:1.

19. *Eichah Rabbah,* the end of ch. 1; *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu,* ch. 40, sec. 445.

ה) מגילה לא, ב. (ומה שכתוב בתוספות - עיין שם בחידושי אגדות מהרש"א).

ו) זע לקוטי תורה ויקרא מח, א.

ז) מגילה לא, ב.

ח) זע לקו"ש ח"ב עמוד 386 הערה 12.

ט) וואס איז העכער פון אב הרחמן - זע לקוטי תורה דברים סב, ד. שיר השירים יו"ד, ג.

י) זע יבמות מו, ב.

יא) דארט כב, א. ושם נסמן.

יב) רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ז, הלכה ד, און זע ספר המאמרים תש"ט עמוד 183 הערה 1.

יג) שמות רבה ריש פרשה מו.

יד) איכה רבה פ"א בסופה.

KI SAVO III | כי תבא ג

Adapted from a letter composed on 6 Elul, 5715 (1955) and a *sichah* delivered on 20 Menachem Av, 5711 (1951)

Introduction

The age-old question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" has troubled humanity throughout history. When we're in the midst of suffering, rational explanations offer little comfort; the immediate pain is too great. However, when the intensity of the anguish subsides, it is possible to realize that there may be a fundamental flaw in the question itself.

The question arises when we think of the world as "our world." However, when we realize that this is "G-d's world," controlled in all of its details by Divine Providence, our perspective shifts fundamentally.

We may not understand why G-d does what He does – indeed, the Divine plan often transcends human comprehension – but the knowledge that it is His world enables us to move forward. Our Sages captured this truth in two profound maxims: "Everything the Merciful One does is [ultimately] for the good"[1] and "This, too, is [itself] for the good."[2] Anchored by the wisdom of these Talmudic maxims, we need not be paralyzed by unsolvable questions. Instead, we can live purposefully, finding meaning and joy in our daily experience.

The question isn't whether we can justify suffering, but whether we can develop the spiritual vision to recognize that, in G-d's world, there truly are no "bad things" – only experiences we don't yet understand from our vantage point.

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1. *Berachos* 60b.

2. *Taanis* 21a; *Sanhedrin* 108b.

Learning To Be Thankful for Everything

Seeing G-d's Hand

1. Our Sages use two different expressions to communicate the concept that everything that happens is for the good:

a) "Everything the Merciful One does is [ultimately] for the good."[1]

b) "This, too, is [itself] for the good."[2]

There is a difference between the source texts of **these two expressions: "This, too, is [itself] for the good" is in** Hebrew, ***Lashon HaKodesh,*** **the Holy Tongue, a holy and clear language.** As such, **any concept expressed in the Holy Tongue is clear.** And, in this context, **it can be clearly seen that everything is for the good.**

By contrast, "Everything the Merciful One does is [ultimately] for the good" was rendered in Aramaic, **the** popular **vernacular** of the time, used for **translation.** This phrasing implies that **although it is also** ultimately **"for the good,"** "the good" **is not perceived so clearly.**

The distinction between these two expressions **becomes evident when** analyzing **the difference between the** two stories **that the Talmud cites as illustrations of these expressions.**

The story the Talmud uses to illustrate the insight, **"Everything the Merciful One does is [ultimately] for the good"** involves **Rabbi Akiva**[6] **who, when traveling, took with him a lamp, a donkey, and a rooster on his journey.**

(Today, people take other things when

א. אִין דֶעם עִנְיָן אַז אַלְץ אִיז לְטוֹבָה, זַיְינֶען פַאַראַן צְווֵיי פַארְשִׁידֶענֶע לְשׁוֹנוֹת אִין דִבְרֵי חַזַ"ל: א) כָּל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד[טו]. ב) גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה[טז].

דֶער חִילוּק פוּן דִי בֵּיידֶע לְשׁוֹנוֹת אִיז: כָּל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד אִיז אִין תַּרְגּוּם לָשׁוֹן אוּן גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה אִיז אוֹיף לְשׁוֹן הַקוֹדֶשׁ. לְשׁוֹן הַקוֹדֶשׁ אִיז אַ לָשׁוֹן קָדוֹשׁ וּמְבוּרָר. אַלֶע עִנְיָנִים וָואס אִין לָשׁוֹן קוֹדֶשׁ זַיְינֶען קְלָאר. דָאס הֵייסְט אַז מֶען זֶעט אָן קְלָאר אַז אַלְץ אִיז לְטוֹבָה. אָבֶּער כָּל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד, וָואס אִיז גֶעזָאגְט גֶעוָוארְן אוֹיף תַּרְגּוּם לָשׁוֹן, אִיז הֲגַם אַז עֶס אִיז אוֹיךְ לְטַב עָבִיד, אָבֶּער דָאס זֶעט זִיךְ נִיט אָן אַזוֹי קְלָאר.

דִי דֶערְקְלֶערוּנְג אִין דֶעם וֶועט מֶען פַארְשְׁטֵיין פוּן דֶעם חִילוּק וָואס אִיז פַאַראַן צְווִישְׁן דִי דוּגְמָאוֹת וֶועלְכֶע דִי גְמָרָא בְּרֶענְגְט אוֹיף דִי צְווֵיי דֶערְמָאנְטֶע לְשׁוֹנוֹת.

דִי דוּגְמָא וֶועלְכֶע דִי גְמָרָא בְּרֶענְגְט אוֹיף כָּל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד אִיז:

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אִיז גֶעגַאנְגֶען אִין וֶועג, הָאט עֶר מִיט זִיךְ מִיטְגֶענוּמֶען אַ נֵר, אַ חֲמוֹר אוּן אַ תַּרְנְגוֹל (אַ לִיכְט, אַן אֵייזְל אוּן אַ הָאן).

- הַיְינְט אַז מֶען פָארְט אִין וֶועג נֶעמְט

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1. *Berachos* 60b.

2. *Taanis* 21a; *Sanhedrin* 108b.

they travel, such as a checkbook, a toothbrush, etc. Then, it was different. When one traveled, he would take a lamp so that he could study Torah even when it was dark, a donkey to carry his physical things so that he would not be burdened by them, and a rooster to wake him at midnight so he could pray and study.)

G-d designed the circumstances in such a way that no one in the nearby city offered Rabbi Akiva hospitality, and he had to spend the night in the field. A wind came and blew out his lamp so he was forced to remain in the dark. A lion came and devoured his donkey, and a cat came and consumed his rooster. Despite all this, Rabbi Akiva said, "Everything the Merciful One does is [ultimately] for the good."

Later, it became evident that everything was indeed for the good. That night, the nearby city was attacked and its inhabitants captured. Had he spent the night there, he would have been seized with the others. Had his lamp been burning in the field, the attackers would have seen him. Since it is natural for donkeys to bray and roosters to crow, had they remained alive, these sounds would have been heard. Rabbi Akiva's presence would have been detected and he, too, would have suffered the fate of the others. Thus, the entire chain of events, though they appeared undesirable at the time, led to him being saved.

מֶען מיט אַנְדערע זאַכְן: אַ טשעק־בּוּךְ, אַ צאַן־בּערשְׁטל וכו׳, - אָבּער דעמאָלְט אַז מען איז געפאָרְן, האָט מען מיטגענומען אַ ליכְט, מען זאָל קענען לערנען תּוֹרָה אֲפִילוּ אין דער פינסטערניש, אַ חֲמוֹר וואָס זאָל שלעפּן זיינע גַשְׁמִיוּת און ער זאָל זיין פריי פון דעם, און אַ תַּרְנְגוֹל, ער זאָל אים אויפוועקן צו חֲצוֹת -

האָט דער אויבּערשטער מַזְמִין געווען אַז אין שטאָט האָט מען אים ניט אַריינגעלאָזט, איז ער געבּליבּן נעכטיקן אין פעלד. עס איז געקומען אַ ווינט און האָט פאַרלאָשן די ליכט איז ער געבּליבּן אין דער פינסטער. עס איז געקומען אַ לייבּ און האָט אויפגעגעסן דעם חֲמוֹר, געקומען אַ קאַץ און אויפגעגעסן דעם תַּרְנְגוֹל. האָט רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא געזאָגט: כָּל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד.

שפּעטער האָט זיך אַרויסגעוויזן אַז דאָס אַלְץ איז געווען לְטוֹבָה. ווייל יענע נאַכְט איז געווען אַן אָנְפאַל אויף דער שטאָט, און מען האָט איר בּאַראַבּעוועט. איז אויבּ ער וואָלְט גענעכטיקט אין שטאָט וואָלט ער אויך אַריינגעפאַלְן, אויבּ די ליכט וואָלְט בּרענען אין פעלד וואָלְט מען אים געזען, אויבּ דער חֲמוֹר מיטן תַּרְנְגוֹל וואָלְטן געמאַכט זייערע קוֹלוֹת, וואָלְט מען געהערט די קוֹלוֹת כו׳, און דורך דעם וואָס ער האָט דאָס אַלְץ אָנְגעוואָרן, איז ער נִיצוֹל געוואָרן.

Partnering With G-d to Create Reality

2. The example the Talmud uses to illustrate the insight, "This, too, is [itself] for the good," is a story involving the Sage, Nachum Ish Gamzu.[2] He was so named because the Hebrew for "This, too, is for the good," is *Gam zu letovah*. He would repeat this expression regarding every event, so much so that it became characteristic of his personality and he came to be called Ish Gamzu.

ב. די דוּגְמָא אויף גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה בּרענגט די גְּמָרָא פון דעם תַּנָּא נַחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זוּ. דעם נאָמען אִישׁ גַּם זוּ האָט ער געהאַט, ווייל אויף יעדער זאַך פלעגט ער זאָגן גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה.

Once, he was charged by his fellow Jews **to go on a mission to Rome, and was given** a chest of **precious stones and pearls as a present for the Caesar. At night,** the owner of the inn where he was staying **stole the gems and filled the chest with** simple **earth.** When Nachum Ish Gamzu discovered this, **he said, "This, too, is for the good"** and continued on his journey. He reckoned that since **the Jewish people had appointed him as a messenger to the Caesar, he had to carry out his mission and G-d would** certainly **help him.**

When he came to the Caesar, he gave him the chest as a present. When the chest was opened and all saw that it was filled with earth, they thought of treating Nachum Ish Gamzu as one who rebelled against his ruler. However, G-d immediately sent Eliyahu the Prophet in the guise of a Roman **officer and he suggested to the Caesar that perhaps the earth** that Nachum Ish Gamzu brought **was of the same earth that** miraculously **brought Avraham victory in war.**[3] **The** Romans **had no lack of wars, and they immediately** took the earth into battle to see what would happen. With it, they, too, miraculously **emerged victorious over the Caesar's enemies.**

הָאט מֶען אִים אַמָאל גֶעשִׁיקְט אִין אַ שְׁלִיחוּת צוּם מֶלֶךְ רוֹמִי, אוּן מֶען הָאט אִים מִיטְגֶעגֶעבְּן אֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמַרְגָלִיּוֹת אַלְס אַ מַתָּנָה צוּם מֶלֶךְ. בַּיְינַאכְט הָאט מֶען בַּיי אִים צוּגֶע'גַנְבֶ'עט דִי אֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת, אוּן אַנְשְׁטָאט דֶעם אַרַיְינְגֶעלֵייגְט עֶרְד אִין קֶעסְטְל. הָאט עֶר גֶעזָאגְט גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה. אוּן אַז אִידְן הָאבְּן אִים גֶעמַאכְט פַּאר אַ שְׁלִיחַ צוּם מֶלֶךְ דַארְף עֶר טָאן זַיְין שְׁלִיחוּת, אוּן דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער וֶועט שׁוֹין הֶעלְפְּן.

אַז עֶר אִיז גֶעקוּמֶען צוּם מֶלֶךְ רוֹמִי אוּן גֶעגֶעבְּן דֶעם קֶעסְטְל אַלְס מַתָּנָה, הָאט מֶען גֶעעֶפְנְט דֶעם קֶעסְטְל, אוּן דֶערְזֶעעֶנְדִיק אַז עֶס אִיז פוּל מִיט עֶרְד, הָאט מֶען אִים גֶעוָואלְט טָאן דָאס וָואס מֶען טוּט מִיט אַ מוֹרֵד בְּמַלְכוּת. אָבֶּער דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער הָאט בַּאלְד גֶעשִׁיקְט אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא אִין דְמוּת פוּן אַ שַׂר, אוּן עֶר הָאט גֶעזָאגְט צוּם קֵיסָר, אֶפְשָׁר אִיז דִי עֶרְד פוּן דִי עֶרְד פוּן אַבְרָהָם'עֶן מִיט וֶועלְכֶע עֶר הָאט מְנַצֵּחַ גֶעוֶועְן מִלְחָמוֹת. מִלְחָמוֹת פֶעלְן דָאךְ נִיט בַּיי גוֹיִם, הָאט מֶען בַּאלְד אוֹיסְגֶעפְּרוּאוּוְט אוּן דִי עֶרְד הָאט מְנַצֵּחַ גֶעוֶועְן דִי שׂוֹנְאִים פוּן קֵיסָר.

Highlighting the Difference

3. There is a difference between these two stories:

Rabbi Akiva suffered loss and discomfort. His donkey and rooster were killed. **He** was forced to **spend the night in darkness in the field.** While, ultimately, **it was for the good, the actual experience was one of discomfort.**

But Nachum Ish Gamzu never experienced any loss from the outset. On the contrary, had

ג. דֶער חִילוּק פוּן בֵּיידֶע דוּגְמָאוֹת אִיז:

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא הָאט טַאקֶע גֶעהַאט פַארְלוּסְט אוּן צַעַר. עֶר הָאט פַארְלָארְן דֶעם חֲמוֹר מִיטְן תַּרְנְגוֹל, גֶעזֶעסְן אִין דֶער פִינְסְטֶער אוּן גֶענֶעכְטִיקְט אִין פֶעלְד. דָאס אִיז גֶעוֶועְן צוּלִיבּ אַ טוֹבָה, אָבֶּער דָאס אַלֵיין אִיז גֶעוֶועְן אַן עִנְיָן שֶׁל צַעַר.

בַּיי נָחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זוּ אִיז גָאר לְכַתְּחִלָּה קֵיין הֶזֵּק נִיט גֶעוֶועְן, וְאַדְּרַבָּה, אוֹיבּ עֶר

3. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 43:7.

he brought gems to the Caesar, **who knows whether the Caesar would have accepted them?! After all, were gems lacking in the royal palace?**[4] **When he brought the earth, it was accepted.**

וואָלְט בְּרֶענְגֶען אֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת אִיז וועֶר ווייס צִי בַּיי דֶעם מֶלֶךְ וואָלְט דָאס נִתְקַבֵּל גֶעוואָרְן, וואָרוּם אִין בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ פֶּעלְן נִיט קֵיין אֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת[ז], אָבֶּער אַז עֶר הָאט גֶעבְּרַאכְט דִי עֶרְד אִיז דָאס נִתְקַבֵּל גֶעוואָרְן.

Rabbi Akiva suffered discomfort. It is only that, through this temporary **discomfort, he was saved from a greater** and more permanent **ordeal. By contrast, in Nachum Ish Gamzu's experience,** even that which may have appeared to be a loss, **was itself** entirely **good.**

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא הָאט גֶעהַאט אַ צַעַר, נָאר דוּרְךְ דֶעם צַעַר אִיז עֶר נִיצוֹל גֶעוואָרְן פוּן אַ גְרֶעסֶערְן צַעַר. בַּיי נַחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זוּ אִיז דָאס גוּפָא גֶעווֶען טוֹב.

Realizing That It Is All Good

4. From the above, we can see **the advantage of the expression, "This, too, is for the good," over the expression, "Everything the Merciful One does is for the good."**

ד. אוּן דָאס אִיז דִי מַעֲלָה פוּן דֶעם אוֹיסְשְׁפְּרַאךְ גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה אוֹיפְן אוֹיסְשְׁפְּרַאךְ כָּל דְעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד. גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה, מֵיינְט מֶען אַז זוּ - דָאס אַלֵיין[ח] - אִיז לְטוֹבָה. עֶס אִיז נִיט נָאר אַז דָאס אִיז צוּלִיבּ טוֹב, נָאר דָאס אַלֵיין אִיז טוֹב. עֶס אִיז מֶער נִיט וואָס פְרִיעֶר אִיז גֶעווֶען אַ הֶעְלֵם, מֶען אִיז גֶעווֶען מִיט פַארְמַאכְטֶע אוֹיגְן, הָאט מֶען גֶעמֵיינְט אַז עֶס אִיז אַ נֶזֶק וְצַעַר, אוּן בְּשַׁעַת עֶס גֵייט אַרָאפּ דֶער הֶעְלֵם זֶעט מֶען אַז מִלְכַתְּחִלָּה אִיז דָאס גֶעווֶען טוֹב.

"This, too, is for the good" means that the event itself is good. It is not only good in the end; it is good now, **in and of itself,**[5] **although this may have been concealed initially.** When **one's eyes are closed, it might appear that harm and discomfort are involved.** However, when one's eyes are opened, **it becomes evident that** everything **was good from the outset.**

Nachum Ish Gamzu was Rabbi Akiva's mentor,[6] which implies **that Rabbi Akiva lived one generation after Nachum Ish Gamzu.** Over the passage of that **generation, the darkness of exile became** even **stronger, because with every generation the darkness of exile increases.** Therefore, **in** Rabbi Akiva's **generation, it was impossible to clearly see that** the negative itself **was good.**

נָחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זוֹ אִיז גֶעווֶען רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא'ס רֶבִּי[ט]. דָאס הֵייסְט אַז רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אִיז גֶעווֶען מִיט אַ דוֹר שְׁפֶּעטֶער ווִי נָחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זוּ. אִין אַ דוֹר וואָס דֶער חוֹשֶׁךְ הַגָּלוּת אִיז גֶעווֶען גְרֶעסֶער (וואָרוּם מִיט יֶעדֶער דוֹר ווֶערְט מֶער דֶער חוֹשֶׁךְ), אִיז זַיְין דוֹר הָאט נִיט גֶעקֶענְט זֶען בְּגִילוּי ווִי יֶעדֶער עִנְיָן אַלֵיין אִיז טוֹב.

Even when we know the truth and accept

אֲפִילוּ אַז מֶען ווייס בִּפְשִׁיטוּת דֶעם

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4. **See** ***Iyun Yaakov*** **on** this passage in ***Ein Yaakov.***

5. *Zu,* "this," resembles the word *zeh,* also meaning "this." On the phrase (***Shmos*** **15:2**), "This is my G-d," ***Rashi*** comments that the revelation of G-dliness was so powerful that **"everyone pointed with their finger and said, 'This is my G-d.'"** Similarly, the expression "This, too, is for the good," implies that the good can be clearly perceived.

6. ***Chagigah*** **12a.**

straightforwardly that everything is itself good, in the realities of **the world, the good is not** always **revealed.** In Rabbi Akiva's time, **all that was possible to be revealed was that "everything the Merciful One does is [ultimately]** ***for*** **the good." Nachum Ish Gamzu and his generation** lived **a generation closer to the era of the** ***Beis HaMikdash*** **(or** perhaps **in** that era**).** At that earlier time, **it was possible for it to be revealed – even in the world – that "this, too, is for the good."**

Presently, we are approaching the era of the Ultimate Redemption, the time when "those who love Him will [resemble] the sun when it shines with its might."[7] Then, "the Holy One, blessed be He, will remove the sun from its sheath,"[8] and it will be possible **to see – in an overt manner – that everything "is for the good." When the sun of G-dly** light **will be removed from its sheath,[9]** all **will say,[10] "This is the G-d for whom we hoped."**

אֱמֶת ווִי יֶעדֶער עִנְיָן אִיז אַלֵיין טוֹב, אָבֶּער אִין וועֶלְט קוּמְט עֶס נִיט אַרָאפּ בְּגִילוּי. דָאס וואָס עֶס הָאט גֶעקֶענְט זַיְין בְּגִילוּי אִין וועֶלְט אִיז מֶער נִיט ווִי אַז כָּל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד. מַה שֶׁאֵין כֵּן נָחוּם וּבְדוֹרוֹ שֶׁל נָחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זוּ, מִיט אַ דוֹר נֶענְטֶער צוּם (אָדֶער אִין) זְמַן הַבַּיִת, הָאט מֶען גֶעקֶענְט מְגַלֶּה זַיְין אוֹיךְ אִין וועֶלְט, דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה.

אִיצְטֶער גֵייט מֶען צוּם זְמַן הַגְּאוּלָּה, צוּם זְמַן פוּן וְאֹהֲבָיו כְּצֵאת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בִּגְבֻרָתוֹ[כ], אַז הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מוֹצִיא חַמָּה מִנַּרְתֵּקָהּ אוּן מֶען ווֶעט זֶען בְּגִילוּי אִין יֶעדֶער זַאךְ אַז גַּם זוּ לְטוֹבָה, צוּם זְמַן פוּן שֶׁמֶשׁ ה׳ בְּגִילוּי פוּן זַיְין נַרְתֵּק, אַז מֶען ווֶעט זָאגְן זֶה ה׳ קִוִּינוּ לוֹ.

(משיחת כ׳ מנחם-אב, תשי״א)

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7. ***Shoftim*** **5:31.** See ***Tanya,*** **ch. 26,** where the Alter Rebbe quotes our Sages' statement (*Shabbos* 88b) that this phrase refers to "those who rejoice in adversity," realizing that the hardships they experience are expressions of Divine good too lofty to be revealed within this material world of the present era.

8. *Nedarim* 8b, with regard to the Ultimate Future. At that time, the good and blessing embedded within what once appeared as hardship will be revealed.

9. See *Tehillim* 84:12. *Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah,* ch. 4.

10. *Yeshayahu* 25:9, interpreted by *Taanis* 31a, *et al.,* as referring to the rejoicing of the Jewish people motivated by the overt revelation of G-dliness that will be manifest at that time. See footnote 9 above.

טו) ברכות ס, ב.

טז) תענית כא, א. סנהדרין קח, ב.

יז) עיין עיון יעקב אויפן עין יעקב.

יח) על דרך ווי כל אחד מראה באצבעו ואומר זה א־לי, רש״י שמות טו, ב.

יט) חגיגה יב, סוף ע״א.

כ) שופטים ה, לא. תניא פרק כו.

KI SAVO IV | כי תבא ד

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech,* 5715 (1955)

Introduction

In Psalm 27 – recited twice daily beginning in the month of Elul and continuing until Hosha'ana Rabbah – King David petitions,[1] "One thing I have asked of G-d…." However, the psalm continues with several requests, "that I may dwell in the House of G-d… to behold the pleasantness of G-d, and to visit His Sanctuary…."

The Midrash[2] addresses this apparent contradiction, noting that when G-d questioned why David's one request became many, he answered, "I learned from You. You said,[3] 'What does G-d, your L-rd, ask of you? Only to fear G-d," and then You continued, "to walk in all His ways, to love Him, and to serve G-d."

Commentators explain that both G-d and David had the same intent. As a natural consequence, fulfilling the initial request – "to dwell in the house of G-d" and "to fear G-d" – will lead to all the other requests being filled.

We see a similar pattern in the *sichah* to follow. Focusing on the request, "One thing I have asked…," the Rebbe explains that this request characterizes Elul as a whole and reflects a bond of singular oneness. However, he also elaborates, illustrating that the name Elul also serves as an acronym for several different expressions of Divine service. In truth, our bond with G-d is one of singular oneness. Nevertheless, we are multifaceted beings. It is the services alluded to by the different acronyms of Elul which enable that bond of oneness to permeate every dimension of our personality.

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1. *Tehillim* 27:4.

2. *Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim,* Psalm 27, sec. 706.

3. *Devarim* 10:12.

Completing Preparations

A Hidden Blueprint for Elul

1. The Divine service of Elul serves as preparation for Tishrei. During the month of Elul, a person must correct his deeds of the past year and, bring about within himself – as stated in Psalm 27 (recited throughout the month of Elul), ***Achas sha'alti,* "*One* thing I have asked…"**[1] – a focus on the singular oneness that characterizes the bond between G-d and the Jewish people as a whole and each Jew individually.[2] To achieve that, a person **must depart from all his private concerns.**

This focused approach of **the month of Elul brings about the new flow** of Divine beneficence **in the month of Tishrei** that derives from **"You [G-d] alone, with no strangers accompanying You,"**[3] and results in **a good and sweet year in everything a person needs.**

This explains why the word Elul contains allusions to all three pillars of Divine service upon which the world stands:[4] **Torah study, the service** of prayer (*avodah*),[5] **and acts of kindness.**

Each of these three pillars is alluded to in an acronym for the name Elul:

The pillar of Torah is alluded[6] **to by the first letters** of the four words of the verse,[7] **אנה לידו ושמתי לך, "**[G-d]

א. דִי עֲבוֹדָה פוּן אֱלוּל אִיז דָאךְ אַ הֲכָנָה אוֹיף תִּשְׁרֵי. אִין חֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל דַארְף מֶען מְתַקֵן זַיְין דִי מַעֲשִׂים פוּן פַארְגַאנְגֶענֶעם יָאר אוּן פּוֹעֵל'ן בַּיי זִיךְ - אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי, עֶר זָאל אַרוֹיסְגֵיין פוּן אַלֶע זַיְינֶע עִנְיָנִים פְּרָטִיִּים. אוּן דוּרְךְ דֶעם אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי פוּן חֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל וֶוערְט דֶערְנָאךְ דִי הַמְשָׁכָה חֲדָשָׁה פוּן חֹדֶשׁ תִּשְׁרֵי, לְךָ לְבַדֶךָ וְאֵין לְזָרִים אִתָּךְ, אַ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה בְּכָל הַמִּצְטָרֵךְ לוֹ.

אוּן דָאס אִיז דֶער טַעַם, וָואס אִין דֶעם וָוארְט אֱלוּל וֶוערְן נִרְמָז אַלֶע דְרַיי קַוִּים פוּן תּוֹרָה עֲבוֹדָה וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים.

אֱלוּל - רָאשֵׁי תֵּיבוֹת אִנָּה לְיָדוֹ וְשַׂמְתִּי לְךָ[כא], וָואס דָאס

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1. *Tehillim* 27:4.

2. See *Tosafos,* s.v., *ad achas, Menachos* 18a, which states that *achas* refes to the dimension of the soul referred to as *yechidah,* the point in the soul inherently bonded with G-d in singular oneness.

The Rebbe elaborated on the Divine service implied by the request *achas sha'alti* at length in the *maamar* and other *sichos* delivered at this *farbrengen.*

3. *Mishlei* 5:17, quoted in *Shmos Rabbah* 15:23, *et al.* Such Divine blessings correspond, "measure for measure," with the Jews' Divine service of *achas sha'alti.*

4. See *Avos* 1:2.

5. *Avos,* loc cit., speaks of *avodah* which specifically refers to the service of sacrificial worship carried out in the *Beis HaMikdash.* We have translated it as "the service of prayer," in line with our Sages' teaching (*Berachos* 26b), "The prayers were ordained to correspond with the daily offerings." See *Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvos,* positive commandment 5, and other sources that highlight the connection between prayer and *avodah,* the service of G-d in one's heart.

6. *Pri Eitz Chayim, Shaar Rosh HaShanah,* ch. 1, *Shaar HaPesukim, Shmos* 21:13.

7. *Shmos,* loc. cit. which states in full: "If he did not intend [to kill another] but G-d caused it to occur to his hand, [then] I will provide for you a place [of refuge] where he can flee."

caused it to occur to his hand; [then] I will provide for you…," which refers to the cities of refuge where an unintentional killer could flee. It alludes to Torah study **because, as our Sages say,**[8] **Torah study serves as refuge from the evil inclination.**

The pillar of prayer (*avodah*)[9] **is alluded to by the first letters** of the four words of the verse,[10] **אני לדודי ודודי לי, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."**[11]

And the pillar of acts of kindness is alluded to by the first letters of the four words of the verse,[12] **איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים, "each person to his fellow and gifts to the poor."**

A foundation and introduction to all these pillars is the Divine service of *teshuvah*, which is also alluded to by another acronym for Elul – ומל ה׳ אלקיך את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך "G-d your L-rd will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants."[13] **This is the foundation for all** three **pillars** of service mentioned before. **This follows the pattern of *Modeh Ani,* "I acknowledge before You," which we recite at the beginning of** each **day's Divine service.** Immediately upon arising, before anything else, a Jew **turns to G-d, and his** focus of attention **reaches "before *You*,"** a level of G-dliness above all names, one **not alluded to by any letter or point of a** letter.[14] **This serves as an introduction to all the pillars** of Divine service.

The Divine service of Elul leads to redemption, which is alluded to in the acronym for Elul formed when the first letters of the words,[15] **לה׳ ויאמרו לאמר, אשירה** ("To G-d, they declared responsively: 'I will sing'") are read in reverse order.[16]

גֵייט אוֹיף דֶעם קַו הַתּוֹרָה, וָוארוּם תּוֹרָה אִיז אַ מִקְלָט פוּן יֵצֶר הָרָע, כְּמַאֲמַר רַזַ"ל[כב].

אֱלוּל - רָאשֵׁי תֵּיבוֹת אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי[כג], וָואס דָאס אִיז דֶער קַו הָעֲבוֹדָה, תְּפִלָּה[כד].

אֱלוּל - רָאשֵׁי תֵּיבוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמַתָּנוֹת לָאֶבְיוֹנִים[כה], וָואס דָאס אִיז דֶער קַו פוּן גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים.

אַ יְסוֹד אוּן אַ הַקְדָּמָה צוּ דִי אַלֶע קַוִים אִיז דִי עֲבוֹדָה פוּן תְּשׁוּבָה וָואס אִיז מְרוּמָּז אִין רָאשֵׁי תֵּיבוֹת פוּן אֱלוּל - (וּמָל ה׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ) אֶת לְבָבְךָ וְאֶת לְבַב (זַרְעֶךָ)[כו], וָואס דָאס אִיז דֶער יְסוֹד צוּ אַלֶע קַוִים. וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ וָואס מֶען זָאגְט אִין אָנְהוֹיבּ פוּן עֲבוֹדַת הַיּוֹם, וָואס עֶר קֶערְט זִיךְ צוּם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, אוּן דָאס דֶערְלַאנְגְט אִין לְפָנֶיךָ, דְּלָא אִתְרְמִיז בְּשׁוּם אוֹת וְקוֹץ, וָואס דָאס אִיז אַ הַקְדָּמָה לְכָל הַקַּוִים.

אוּן דוּרְךְ דֶער עֲבוֹדָה פוּן אֱלוּל קוּמְט מֶען צוּ צוּ דֶער גְּאוּלָּה, וָואס אִיז נִרְמָז אִין דִי רָאשֵׁי תֵּיבוֹת לַהֲוָיֶ׳ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אָשִׁירָה, רָאשֵׁי תֵּיבוֹת אֱלוּל[כז].

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8. ***Makkos* 10a. See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 2, pp. 623ff., 380ff.**

9. **See *Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvos,* positive commandment 5, *et al.***

10. *Shir HaShirim,* loc. cit.

11. ***Avudraham, Seder Tefilas Rosh HaShanah VePeirushah,* citing "sermonizers"; *Pri Eitz Chayim,* loc. cit.; *Shaar HaPesukim, Shir HaShirim* 6:3.**

12. *Esther* 9:22. ***Arugas HaBosem* in the name of *Amerkol.*** See *Eliya Rabbah* 581:1.

13. ***Devarim* 30:6. *Baal HaTurim*** on that verse; ***Avudraham,* loc. cit. See *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 4.**

14. The *sefirah* of *chochmah* is alluded to by the letter *yud,* because just as *yud* is a small letter, barely having form, *chochmah,* represents an intermediate state of being, neither utterly transcendent, nor confined by the ordinary structures of existence. The *yud* has a small point at its upper right-hand corner which refers to even loftier and more transcendent levels of G-dliness. However, G-d's Essence is utterly transcendent, "not alluded to by any letter or point of a letter."

15. *Shmos* 15:1.

16. ***Pri Eitz Chayim, Shaar Rosh HaShanah,* ch. 1. See *Sefer HaMaamarim 5711,* p. 319.**

This encompasses the Divine service of the month of Elul as a whole – the preparation for Tishrei. The primary aspect of this service reaches its apex **on the *Shabbos*** when the coming month **of Tishrei is blessed.**[17] **From this *Shabbos,* "are blessed all the days"**[18] **of the** coming **week, including Rosh HaShanah.** The fact that the month of Tishrei is **blessed** by this ***Shabbos*** indicates that the *Shabbos* is **loftier than Tishrei.**

May G-d help us so that we enter the new year with joy, and that we have a good and sweet year, blessed **with everything** we **need.**

דָאס אַלְץ אִיז דִי כְּלָלוּת הָעֲבוֹדָה פוּן חֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל - דִי הֲכָנָה צוּ תִּשְׁרֵי אוּן דֶער עִיקָר פוּן דֶעם אִיז בְּשַׁבָּת וָואס פַאר תִּשְׁרֵי וָואס מִנֵּיהּ מִתְבָּרְכִין כּוּלֵּי יוֹמֵי פוּן דֶער וָואךְ - וְיוֹם רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה בִּכְלַל, שַׁבָּת מְבָרְכִין - לְמַעְלָה - פוּן תִּשְׁרֵי.

הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ זָאל הֶעלְפְן, מֶען זָאל אַרַיְין אִין דֶעם נַיְיעֶם יָאר בְּשִׂמְחָה, אוּן מֶען זָאל הָאבְּן אַ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה בְּכָל הַמִּצְטָרֵךְ.

(משיחת ש"פ נצבים וילך, תשט"ו)

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17. The sentence employs the passive voice because, in contrast to the ordinary practice, on the *Shabbos* preceding Tishrei, the usual request for blessings throughout the approaching month is omitted (*Magen Avraham* 417:1). The Alter Rebbe related in the name of his teachers, the Maggid of Mezritch and the Baal Shem Tov, that "the Holy One Himself blesses [this month] on *Shabbos Mevarchim,* the last *Shabbos* of the month of Elul.… and with the power of this [blessing], the Jewish people bless the months eleven times in the year" (*HaYom Yom,* Entry 25 Elul).

18. *Zohar,* Vol. II, pp. 63b, 88a.

כא) פרי עץ חיים שער ראש השנה פרק א. שער הפסוקים שמות כא, יג.

כב) מכות י, א און זע לקו"ש ח"ב עמוד 623, 380.

כג) אבודרהם סדר תפלת ראש השנה ופירושה בשם הדרשנים. פרי עץ חיים דארט. שער הפסוקים שיר השירים ו, ג.

כד) זע ספר המצות להרמב"ם מצות עשה ה. ובכמה מקומות.

כה) בספר ערוגת הבושם בשם ספר אמרכל.

כו) בעל הטורים דברים ל, ו. אבודרהם דארט, און זע אגרת הקדש סימן ד.

כז) זע לקו"ש ח"ב עמוד 379 הערה 13.

KI SAVO V | כי תבא ה

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered *Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech,* 5713 (1953)

Introduction

Standing before G-d in prayer, we face an immediate dilemma. He is perfect; we are flawed. He is infinite; we are limited. How can we dare approach Him with our requests?

The natural response might be to approach Him with extreme humility, acknowledging our unworthiness and begging for undeserved mercy. Indeed, this is how we begin our *Selichos* prayers, quoting the verse,[1] "To You, G-d, belongs righteousness, and to us [belongs] a face of shame."

As *Rashi* explains, the verse is emphasizing how G-d's judgment is righteous and just. When having to confront the scales of true judgment, we feel shame. However, the Hebrew word translated as "righteousness" is not *tzedek,* the term that would ordinarily be used, but *tzedakah,* which also means "charity." This implies there is a different dimension to our request.

There are two reasons to ask G-d for charity:

One, because we know we are unworthy. Whatever G-d gives us is purely an act of charity, an unwarranted gift.

However, there is a second reason to ask for charity: We refuse to engage in a system of measure-for-measure judgment, where blessings are earned through calculations of merit and achievement. Were such an approach to be adopted, even when the outcome might be favorable to us, it would ultimately limit the flow of Divine blessings we would receive.

Here we are appealing to G-d with humility, emphasizing His charity, not our worth. By seeking charity, we are endeavoring to transcend all systems of measurement entirely. We appeal not to G-d's justice, but to His Essence – that aspect of Divinity that operates beyond all categories and limitations. In doing so, we open ourselves to blessings for the new year that similarly transcend all measure.

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1. *Daniel* 9:7.

Beyond What We Deserve

When We Approach G-d with Our Requests

1. In our *Selichos* prayers, we say, "To You, G-d, belongs righteousness (*tzedakah*), and to us [belongs] a face of shame."[1] In other words, **G-d is just, as it is written,[2] "G-d is righteous in all His ways."** When standing before Him in judgment, **we should feel ashamed because our conduct throughout the year was not as it should have been.**

According to the explanation that "To You, G-d, belongs *tzedakah*" means that G-d possesses righteousness, the prayer should have said, "To You, G-d, belongs *tzedek*," since *tzedek* means "righteousness." So why does it use the term *tzedakah*, which also means "charity," like the charity given **to a poor person?**

To clarify **the difference between righteousness and charity: Righteousness means that one gives to the other because the other has earned it. This is just conduct. Charity means that one gives a free,** unwarranted **gift. Not only does the recipient not deserve payment according to the law, but he doesn't even deserve it as a gift. Gifts are** given in line with the principle,[3] **"If [the recipient] had not done something that generated satisfaction for [the giver], he would not have given him a gift."** In the above prayer, we recognize that since we are unworthy, **what** G-d **gives us is purely an act of charity, an unwarranted gift.**

Therefore, we say, "To You, G-d, belongs *tzedakah*," which has two meanings, because here,

א. אִין סְלִיחוֹת זָאגְט מֶען, לְךָ ה׳ הַצְּדָקָה וְלָנוּ בֹּשֶׁת הַפָּנִים. בַּיי דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן אִיז גֶערֶעכְטִיקַיְיט, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב צַדִּיק ה׳ בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו[כח], אוּן מִיר, מִצַּד דִי עִנְיָנִים וָואס מֶען הָאט גֶעטָאן דוּרְכְן יָאר נִיט ווִי מֶען דַארְף, דַארְפְן זִיךְ שֶׁעמֶען.

לוֹיט דֶעם פֵּירוּשׁ אַז לְךָ ה׳ הַצְּדָקָה מֵיינְט אַז בַּיי דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן אִיז גֶערֶעכְטִיקַיְיט, הָאט עֶר גֶעדַארְפְט זָאגְן לְךָ ה׳ הַצֶּדֶק, וָואס צֶדֶק מֵיינְט גֶערֶעכְטִיקַיְיט, פַארְוָואס זָאגְט עֶר דֶעם לָשׁוֹן פוּן צְדָקָה, וָואס הָאט אוֹיךְ דֶעם פֵּירוּשׁ צְדָקָה (צוּ אַן אָרֶעמַאן)?

דֶער חִילוּק פוּן גֶערֶעכְטִיקַיְיט אוּן צְדָקָה אִיז: גֶערֶעכְטִיקַיְיט הֵייסְט אַז מֶען גִיט יֶענֶעם ווַיְילֶע עֶר הָאט פַארְדִינְט, דָאס אִיז אַ גֶערֶעכְטֶע הַנְהָגָה. צְדָקָה מֵיינְט אַז מֶען גִיט אַ מַתְּנַת חִנָּם. נִיט נָאר וָואס עֶס קוּמְט אִים נִיט קֵיין בַּאצָאלְט עַל פִּי דִין, נָאר אֲפִילוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ מַתָּנָה קוּמְט אִים אוֹיךְ נִיט. וָוארוּם אוֹיךְ מַתָּנָה אִיז דָאךְ אִי לַאו דְּעָבִיד לֵיהּ נַיְיחָא לְנַפְשֵׁיהּ לָא הֲוָה יָהִיב לֵיהּ מַתַּנְתָּא[כט], אוּן דָאס וָואס מֶען אִיז אִים מַשְׁפִּיעַ אִיז דָאס נָאר אַן עִנְיָן פוּן צְדָקָה, מַתְּנַת חִנָּם.

אוּן דֶערְפַאר זָאגְט מֶען לְךָ ה׳ הַצְּדָקָה, וָואס הָאט צְווֵיי פֵּירוּשִׁים,

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1. *Daniel* 9:7.

2. ***Tehillim* 145:17**

3. **See *Megilah* 26b, *et al.***

too, two concepts are intended: "G-d is righteous in all His ways," and, as a result, **"to us, [belongs] a face of shame." As such, one feels that from the perspective of** ***tzedek,*** **righteousness, we have no right to expect anything.** Instead, we ask **only for** ***tzedakah***, **as we say in the** ***Selichos***, **"We have no face to entreat Your countenance; we seek only charity from You."**

ווַיְיל אוֹיךְ דָא זַיְינֶען גֶעמֵיינְט צְוֵויי עִנְיָנִים: דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער אִיז גֶערֶעכְט בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וְלָנוּ בֹּשֶׁת הַפָּנִים, אוּן דֶעמָאלְט פִילְט מֶען אַז מִצַּד צֶדֶק - גֶערֶעכְטִיקַיְיט - אִיז נִיט צוּ מָאנֶען, מֶער נִיט וָואס מֶען בֶּעט צְדָקָה, ווִי מִיר זָאגְן דֶעם לָשׁוֹן אִין סְלִיחוֹת, פָּנִים אֵין לָנוּ פָּנֶיךָ לְחַלּוֹת, צְדָקָה לְךָ לְבַד נְבַקֵּשׁ.

Bypassing the Scales of Judgment

2. However, there is another way to view this. Instead of seeing ourselves through a lens shaped by our actions, we can adjust our gaze and view matters from the vantage point of our G-dly souls. In that light, **in truth,** there is **justification for our demands** of G-d. **All Jews are "children of kings."**[4] Now, **a king's child is not accustomed to** doing **work.** Taking that **and his status as a king's child** into consideration, **everything he does, even the smallest thing, is a great accomplishment;** it is considered **difficult work, and** for that, **he deserves abundant compensation.**

ב. בְּאֶמֶת הָאט מֶען גֶעקֶענְט מָאנֶען עַל פִּי דִין. וָוארוּם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי מְלָכִים הֵם[ד], אוּן אַ בֶּן מֶלֶךְ, מִצַּד דֶעם וָואס עֶר אִיז נִיט רָגִיל אִין אַרְבֶּעט, אוֹיךְ מִצַּד זַיְין מַעֲלָה וָואס עֶר אִיז אַ בֶּן מֶלֶךְ, אִיז יֶעדֶער זַאךְ וָואס עֶר טוּט, אֲפִילוּ גָאר קְלֵיינִיקַיְיט, אִיז דָאס אַ גְרוֹיסֶע רְבוּתָא, אַ שְׁווֶערֶע אַרְבֶּעט, אוּן עֶס קוּמְט אִים אַ גְרוֹיסֶער תַּשְׁלוּם.

However, were we to base our demands on just compensation for what we achieved, **then the flow** of Divine beneficence **would come from a lower level, from a** limited degree of **light drawn down by our service** in keeping with our limited achievements. It would not be commensurate with our transcendant, unlimited qualities stemming from who we truly are, souls who are "actually a part of G-d." Any **light** drawn down through judgment **is limited. We seek something loftier.**[5]

אָבֶּער דֶעמָאלְט וָואלְט גֶעווֶען דִי הַמְשָׁכָה פוּן אַ נִידֶערִיקְן אָרְט, פוּן אַן אוֹר הַשַּׁיָּיךְ לָעוֹלָמוֹת וָואס עֶס דֶערְלַאנְגְט אַהִין אִתְעֲרוּתָא דִלְתַתָּא. וָואס דָאס אִיז אַן אוֹר מוּגְבָּל. מִיר ווִילְן אָבֶּער הֶעכֶער.

As **the Alter Rebbe was** wont to **say,**[6] **"'Whom do I**

דֶער אַלְטֶער רֶבִּי הָאט גֶעזָאגְט:

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4. *Shabbos* **67a,** ***et al.***

5. The Rebbe is clarifying that when taking into consideration that we – the Jews – are "children of the King," the scales of judgment would have to be altered, and tilted favorably. Nevertheless, inherently, our souls desire something far greater than could be drawn down by any scale of judgment. Because we desire – and innately share – a bond with G-d's Essence, we want to draw down G-dliness from His Essence and not from a level associated with judgment, no matter how favorable that judgment would be. As the Rebbe proceeds to explain, beneficence from His Essence is granted solely through *tzedakah,* an unwarranted gift, because there is no service that can reach that level.

6. Quoted by the *Tzemach Tzedek* in ***Derech Mitzvosecha, Shoresh Mitzvas HaTefilah,*** **sec. 40.** p. 138a.

have in heaven [but You?!] And besides You, I desire nothing.'[7]... I want nothing at all, I don't want Your *Gan Eden*,[8] I don't want Your World to Come... I want nothing other than You alone."

True, this is a very lofty level. Nevertheless, we are the Alter Rebbe's students and followers who walk in his footsteps, or at the very least, residents of the place where he is the spiritual authority. As such, we have an obligation and privilege to conduct ourselves, at least in practice, according to the conduct he demonstrated. This includes the approach of "Whom do I have in heaven…." The practical application of "Whom do I have in heaven…," as it applies to us, **is to go beyond ourselves, to transcend all personal boundaries and** commit ourselves to **doing what G-d wants.**

G-d's Essence has **no limitations. Consequently, even when the flow of Divine beneficence descends into this** physical **realm, it descends without any contractions or limitations.**

Since our requests are focused on G-d's Essence, we are asking for *tzedakah*, an unwarranted gift. **That is why we say, "We seek only charity from You." It is not because we cannot make demands, but because** making demands implies dealing with a framework where scales of judgment exist; **we don't want to deal with any** such framework. **We want** to address our requests **"to *You*, G-d,"** to G-d's very Essence. As we have been asking throughout the month of Elul, **"Your countenance,[9] G-d, I will seek."[10]**

The conduit to reach **"You, G-d," the conduit to find "Your countentance, G-d," involves not making demands** and backing them **with justifications and reasons,** however valid they may be, **because** there are no reasons and justifications that can evoke gen-

מִי לִי בַשָּׁמַיִם וְעִמְּךָ לֹא חָפַצְתִּי, אִיךְ ווִיל זֶע גָאר נִיסְט אִיךְ ווִיל נִיט דַיְין גַּן עֵדֶן אִיךְ ווִיל נִיט דַיְין עוֹלָם הַבָּא כו׳ אִיךְ ווִיל מֶער נִיט אַז דִיךְ אַלֵיין[לא],

- וואָס כָאטשׁ אַז דָאס אִיז אַ גָאר הוֹיכֶע מַדְרֵיגָה, פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן, ווִיבַּאלְד אַז מִיר זַיְינֶען דָאךְ זַיְינֶע (דֶעם אַלְטְן רֶבִּי׳נְס) תַּלְמִידִים אוּן מְקוּשָּׁרִים הַהוֹלְכִים בְּעִקְבוֹתָיו, לְכָל הַפָּחוֹת - תּוֹשָׁבֵי הַמָּקוֹם וואוּ עֶר אִיז מָרָא דְאַתְרָא, לִיגְט אוֹיף אוּנְז אַ חוֹב וּזְכוּת צוּ פִירְן זִיךְ, בְּנוֹגֵעַ לְפוֹעֵל עַל כָּל פָּנִים, אִין דִי הַנְהָגוֹת וואָס עֶר הָאט אָנְגֶעוויזְן, וּבִכְלַל זֶה אוֹיךְ אִין דֶער הַנְהָגָה פוּן מִי לִי בַשָּׁמַיִם כו׳. דִי תְּנוּעָה פוּן מִי לִי בַשָּׁמַיִם כו׳ בְּהַנוֹגֵעַ לְפוֹעֵל אִיז, - אַרוֹיסְגֵיין פוּן זִיךְ, אַרוֹיסְגֵיין פוּן אַלֶע אֵייגֶענֶע הַגְבָּלוֹת אוּן טָאן דָאס וואָס דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער ווִיל -

וואָס דָארְטְן אִיז דָאךְ בְּלִי גְבוּל, וּבְמֵילָא אִיז אוֹיךְ דִי הַמְשָׁכָה ווִי זִי קוּמְט אַרָאפּ לְמַטָּה אִיז זִי אָן קֵיינֶע צִמְצוּמִים וְהַגְבָּלוֹת.

אוּן דֶערִיבֶּער זָאגְן מִיר צְדָקָה לְךָ לְבַד נְבַקֵּשׁ, נִיט דֶערְפַאר וואָס מֶען קֶען נִיט מָאנֶען, נָאר דֶערְפַאר וואָס מִיר ווִילְן נִיט הָאבְּן צוּ טָאן מִיט קֵיינֶעם, מִיר ווִילְן, לְךָ ה׳, אֶת פָּנֶיךָ ה׳ אֲבַקֵּשׁ.

אוּן דִי כְּלִי צוּם לְךָ הֲוָיָ׳, דִי כְּלִי אוֹיף גֶעפִינֶען פָּנֶיךָ ה׳, אִיז נִיט דֶער אוֹיסְ׳טַעֲנֶה׳ן זִיךְ מִיט חֶשְׁבּוֹנוֹת,

7. *Tehillim* 73:25

8. The abode of the souls in the spiritual realms.

9. *Panim,* translated as "countenance," shares the root letters of the word *p'nimiyus,* meaning "inner dimension." When reciting this verse, we are seeking G-d's innermost dimension.

10. *Tehillim* 27:8, part of the psalm recited throughout the month of Elul and continuing until Hoshaanah Rabbah.

וָוארוּם עֶס אִין דָאךְ - אִם צָדַקְתָּ מַה תִּתֶּן לוֹ. דִי כְּלִי אִיז דֶער וְלָנוּ בֹּשֶׁת הַפָּנִים. בִּיטוּל אוּן הֶעְדֵר הַיֵּשׁוּת - אִיז דִי כְּלִי צוּ אָנְרִירְן אִין עַצְמוּת אוּן מַמְשִׁיךְ זַיְין פוּן דָארְטְן, וָואס אַלֶע הַמְשָׁכוֹת פוּן דָארְטְן זַיְינֶען - צְדָקָה.

אוּן נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק אוֹיף דֶעם, וָואס עֶס אִיז אַן אָרְט וָואס מַעֲשֵׂה הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים אִיז דָארְטְן נִיט נוֹגֵעַ, פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן הָאבְּן אִידְן בְּכֹחַ, וָואס מֶען הָאט זֵיי גֶעגֶעבְּן מִלְמַעְלָה, וּבִקַּשְׁתֶּם מִשָּׁם - וּמָצָאתָ, צוּ מָאנֶען מֶען זָאל זֵיי גֶעבְּן דִי צְדָקָה, אוּן אִידְן זַיְינֶען זִיכֶער אַז זֵיי וֶועלְן דָאס אוֹיסְפִירְן[לב], וָואס דֶערְפַאר אִיז לוֹבְשִׁים לְבָנִים וכו'[לג]. מֶען אִיז בָּטוּחַ אַז דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער וֶועט מְמַלֵּא זַיְין מִשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבֵּנוּ לְטוֹבָה בְּבָנֵי חַיֵּי וּמְזוֹנֵי רְוִיחֵי אִין אַ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה בְּגַשְׁמִיּוּת וּבְרוּחְנִיּוּת.

(משיחת ש"פ נצו"י, תשי"ג)

erosity from G-d's Essence, as it is written,[11] **"If you are righteous, what do you give Him?"**

The conduit to evoke beneficence from "You, G-d," from G-d's Essence, **is "to us [belongs] a face of shame." Self-nullification and absence of ego are the conduits to reach G-d's Essence and evoke** blessings **from there. And coming from** that source, **any flow** of Divine beneficence **is *tzedakah,* an unwarranted gift.**

True, this is a realm where the actions of lower beings are not relevant, and if so of what import are our requests? **Nevertheless, the Jews possess the power** – a power **granted them from Above,** as it is written, **"You shall seek from there, and you will find"**[12] **– to demand that they be given this *tzedakah.*** Moreover, **the Jews are certain that they will achieve this** and evoke these blessings.[13] **That is why they wear white garments** and prepare festive meals for the Day of Judgment.[14] **We are confident that G-d will fulfill the desires of our hearts for good,** granting **children, life, and sustenance in abundance,** blessing us with **a good and sweet year in** both **material and spiritual matters.**

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11. *Iyov* 35:7.

12. *Devarim* 4:29.

13. **See *Tanya, Iggeres HaTeshuvah,* ch. 11,** which states that we recite G-d's name when making blessings in our prayers without questioning whether the blessings are being recited in vein, for we are certain that G-d will fulfill our prayers.

14. ***Talmud Yerushalmi, Rosh HaShanah* 1:3;** *Tur, Orach Chayim,* the end of sec. 581.

כח) תהלים קמה, יז.

כט) זע מגילה כו, ב ובכמה מקומות.

ל) שבת סז, א ובכמה מקומות.

לא) זע לקו"ש ח"ב עמוד 363 הערה 12.

לב) זע אגרת התשובה פרק יא.

לג) ירושלמי ראש השנה פרק א, הלכה ג.

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