

תשובה

Yayeflech תל"ח

This *Shabbat* is known as "*Shabbat Shuvah*," after the *Haftarah's* opening verse (*Hoshea* 14:2), "*Shuvah / Return, Yisrael, to Hashem, your Elokim, for you have stumbled through your sin.*" Later in the *Haftarah* we read from the book of *Yoel*, including the verses (2:17-19), "*Between the Hall and the Altar, the Kohanim, the ministers of Hashem, will weep, and they will say, 'Have pity, Hashem, upon Your people and do not make Your heritage into shame for the nations to use as an example. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is your Elokim?'' [Then, when you will have repented,] Hashem will have been zealous regarding His land and will have taken pity on His people. Then Hashem will have answered and will have said to His people: 'Behold! I send you the grain and the wine and the oil, and you shall be satiated with it; I will not make you again as a shame among the nations'.*"

R' Chaim Elazar Shapira z"l (1868-1937; *Munkatcher Rebbe*; known as the *Minchas Elazar* after his *Halachic* works) notes a seeming incongruity between the prayer of the *Kohanim* and *Hashem's* response. They pray: "*Do not make Your heritage into shame for the nations to use as an example.*" Why does *Hashem* respond with a promise of grain, wine, and oil?

The *Munkatcher Rebbe* explains based on a parable with which R' Chaim Halberstam z"l (1793-1876; rabbi and *Chassidic Rebbe* of Nowy Sacz / Sanz, Galicia; known as the *Sanzer Rav*) answered a man who asked him to pray that the man should have a good livelihood in the coming year.

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## Selichot

**"Yours, Hashem, is the righteousness and ours is the shamefacedness." (Daniel 9:7)**

Why do we begin the *Selichot* every day by reciting this verse? R' Aharon David Goldberg *shlita* (*Rosh Hayeshiva* of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio) explains:

R' Moshe Cordevero z"l (*Remak*; Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; 1522-1570) writes regarding the verse (*Tehilim* 130:4), "*With You is Selichah / forgiveness,*" that there are two words for atonement: "*Selichah*" / atonement in which the sin is simply erased, and "*Mechilah*" / atonement that comes only after the person has undergone suffering. "*Selichah*" is *Hashem's*, says the verse in *Tehilim*; no suffering is necessary because *Hashem* Himself cleanses the person who has sinned, as a mother cleans a baby, so-to-speak. (*Remak* adds that since we are obligated to emulate *Hashem*, this is the attitude we should take toward those who have sinned against us.)

R' Goldberg continues: The knowledge that *Hashem* Himself cleans up after one who has sinned should be a powerful motivator for a person not to sin or, at least, to be ashamed when he does sin. That is the message we remind ourselves of as we begin *Selichot* every day: "*Yours, Hashem, is the righteousness and ours is the shamefacedness.*"

At the same time, there is another emotion we should experience, R' Goldberg adds. R' Nachum Zev Ziv z"l (died 1916; son of the "*Alter of Kelm*") writes in a letter, "*Imagine if the wealthiest person in town went out in the street and put his arm around the shoulders of a dirty, ragged homeless person and treated him as a friend. Not only would this make quite an impression on bystanders, the beneficiary of the kindness would have no idea how to express his gratitude to the rich man.*"

We, continues R' Ziv, are incredibly sullied by sin, far more than we realize. Nevertheless, *Hashem* permits us to pray to Him, to speak to Him face-to-face. How great must be our gratitude to and our love for Him!

(*Shirat David Al Siddur: Yamim Nora'im* p.33)

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The *Sanzer Rav* related: A king had a very wild son. After all other attempts to tame the young prince had failed, the king's advisors recommended that the boy be exiled to a distant land, where he would live with a peasant and work hard all day--leaving him no time to misbehave and teaching him a solid work ethic. And so, the boy was exiled.

Many years passed, and the king pined for his son. The king's advisors recommended that he not bring the prince back too quickly; rather, they said that the king should travel to a place near where the prince was living, and from there the king could investigate whether his son had outgrown his wild ways and was ready to return. And so the king did.

The prince heard that his father was nearby, and he came to meet him. They fell into each other's arms and cried, and the king said, "My son! Ask me for anything!"

The prince replied, "Father, the hut where I live is very cold. Please repair the stove so I will have heat."

The prince's foolishness is obvious, and the meaning of the *Sanzer Rav's* parable is clear, writes the *Munkatcher Rebbe*: On the High Holidays, *Hashem* is nearby, as we read (*Yeshayah* 55:6), "Seek *Hashem* when He can be found; call Him when He is near"--a verse that our Sages apply to the ten days from *Rosh Hashanah* through *Yom Kippur*. When we have *Hashem's* "ear," so-to-speak, and we could be focusing our prayers on asking *Hashem* for the Final Redemption, why are we focusing on our personal needs?!

Indeed, the central theme of our prayers on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is not our personal needs, as a quick perusal of the High Holiday *Shemoneh Esrei* reveals. Rather, we pray that the entire world should unite in serving *Hashem*, for the honor of the Jewish People, for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and our return to *Eretz Yisrael*, and that *Hashem's* Honor should finally be revealed to the world. These are the same things for which our *Haftarah* says the *Kohanim* will pray: "Do not make Your heritage into shame for the nations to use as an example. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is your *Elokim*?'"

But, the time for the Final Redemption may not yet have come. In that case, writes the *Munkatcher Rebbe*, *Hashem* will answer our prayers for the redemption by giving us the tools to survive the long exile, to hang on until the redemption does come. "Behold!" says *Hashem*, "I send you the grain and the wine and the oil, and you shall be satiated with it; I will not make you again as a shame among the nations." If we pray for better heating in our huts, we will have missed an opportunity. But, if we pray sincerely for *Hashem's* Honor, for the honor of the Jewish People, etc., *Hashem* will respond by providing all of our needs until the redemption does arrive, speedily in our days. (*Sha'ar Yissaschar: Ma'amar Shuvah Yisrael*)

**"Moshe went and spoke these words to all of *Yisrael*. He said to them, 'I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I can no longer go out and come in, for *Hashem* has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.' *Hashem*, your *Elokim*--He will cross before you, He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall possess them; Yehoshua--he shall cross over before you, as *Hashem* has spoken'." (31:1-3)**

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) writes: The Torah is relating that Moshe went from the camp of the *Levi'im* (where he lived and taught Torah) to the camp of *Bnei Yisrael* to show them honor, like a person who plans to depart from a place and comes to ask leave.

*Ramban* continues: Moshe said, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today," to console *Bnei Yisrael*, as if to say: "I am old, and you have no further use for me, for *Hashem* will go before you." Though Moshe was in perfect physical condition, as we read (34:7), "Moshe was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye had not dimmed, and his vigor had not diminished," he said this (*i.e.*, our verses) to console *Bnei Yisrael*. [Until here from *Ramban*]

R' Meir Zvi Bergman *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Rashbi in Bnei Brak) writes: This is truly wondrous! On Moshe's last day on earth, he is not mourning his upcoming death; rather, he is busy consoling *Bnei Yisrael* so they will not be overly distressed by his impending passing. He is not thinking about his personal spiritual growth; he is busy convincing *Bnei Yisrael* that he is an old man and they will not miss him.

R' Yaakov ben Asher z"l (the "*Ba'al Ha'turim*"; Germany and Spain; 1269-1343) writes (in his commentary to *Devarim* 4:23) that when Moshe prayed that he be allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, he hoped to be answered in the merit of encouraging *Bnei Yisrael* not to fear the Canaanites. But Moshe had many merits, R' Bergman notes. Why did Moshe single out the merit of encouraging *Bnei Yisrael*?

R' Bergman answers: There is nothing holier than the Jewish People. Therefore, a person can have no greater merit than the merit of encouraging and strengthening the Jewish People. In this light, R' Bergman writes, it is readily understandable that the Moshe would choose as the last *Mitzvah* he would perform in his life to walk throughout the camp and offer encouragement to *Bnei Yisrael*. (*Sha'arei Orah: Ma'amarim*)

**"But, conceal, I will conceal My face on that day because of all the evil that [*Yisrael*] did, for it had turned to the gods of others." (31:18)**

R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810) teaches: There are two levels of *Hester Panim* / concealment of G-d's "face." When G-d merely hides Himself, it is difficult to find Him, but it is possible if one looks hard enough. And, since one knows that G-d is hidden, one can motivate himself to seek Him.

Sometimes, however, G-d conceals the fact that He is concealed; life seems good, and we don't realize that *Hashem* is missing from our lives. This is a greater tragedy because, when we don't know that He is concealed, we are not motivated to search for Him. (*Likutei Moharan* I 56:3)