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## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

### ראש השנה למענך אלקים חיים

The Mishnah (*Rosh Hashanah* 3:7-8) states:

מי שְׁהִיָּה עוֹבֵר אַחֲרֵי בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת וְכוּ', וְשָׁמַע קוֹל שׁוֹפָר וְכוּ', אִם כָּוֵן לְבוֹ, יֵצֵא, וְאִם לֹא, לֹא יֵצֵא. אִף עַל פִּי שְׂזָה שָׁמַע וְזָה שָׁמַע, זֶה כָּוֵן לְבוֹ וְזָה לֹא כָּוֵן לְבוֹ.

"וְהָיָה כִּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מִשָּׁה יָדוֹ וְגָבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל", וְכִי יֵדִיו נִשְׁלַח מִשָּׁה עוֹשׂוֹת מַלְחָמָה אוֹ שׁוֹבְרוֹת מַלְחָמָה? אֵלֵּא לֹא יִזְמַר לָךְ, כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִסְתַּכְּלִים כָּל־פִּי מַעֲלָה וּמִשְׁעַבְדִּין אֶת לְבָבָם לְאֲבֵיהֶם שְׁבַשְׁמִים הָיוּ מִתְגַּבְּרִים.

*Someone who was passing behind a shul, and heard the sound of the shofar, if he concentrated, he has fulfilled his obligation; but if not, he has not fulfilled his obligation. Even though both he and someone else listened, this one concentrated but the other did not concentrate.*

*"And it came to pass when Moshe raised his hand that Klal Yisroel prevailed." Was it Moshe's hands that won the battle or lost the battle? Rather the Torah teaches you: As long as Klal Yisroel looked heavenward and subjected their heart to their Father in Heaven, they would prevail.*

The above Mishnah emphasises how *kavanah* is critical to the potency of *tefillah*, and how the correct focus made all the difference when Klal Yisroel were at war. The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* brings an enlightening explanation from the Tiferes Yisroel on the above Mishnah, which can provide a framework for our *tefillas* in general, especially during this time of the year. The Tiferes Yisroel writes, "*Tefillos* are only accepted when they are *davened* with the intention that Hashem should assist a person to strengthen them for His service!" This is a daunting fact; *davening* for personal needs is not heard, and to guarantee the acceptance of *tefillah*, one must bear in mind that all requests must be to act as a medium to serve Hashem.

In the *tefillas* of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, we say, *כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹקִים חַיִּים, Inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, O living G-d.* R' Yisroel Salanter explained that when we ask for life, it must be *לְמַעַנְךָ - for your sake*, to utilise the life Hashem gives us to serve Him. This aligns with the teaching from the Tiferes Yisroel, which states that we can only receive life and goodness by asking Hashem to grant it to us as a means to serve Him.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 39b) states that if a person has more sins than merits, they are granted enjoyment in this world to make up for the goodness they have done. R' Yisroel asks: We find many sinners who have done some good deeds, but they do not seem to have a pleasant life. Where is this enjoyable life that the Gemara promises them?

He answered with a *mashal*: A guest once visited a luxurious hotel with beautiful lights, plush carpets, and beautiful music playing. He sat in a comfortable chair, next to an ornate table adorned with beautiful flowers, and requested a glass of water from the waiter. After being served, he asked about

the price and was astounded at the steep price demanded of him for a simple cup of water. He questioned the exorbitant price for the most simple and inexpensive product and was told that he wasn't merely paying for the water but for the luxurious furnishings of the hotel which provided such a pleasurable experience. To his astonishment, he then noticed that the waiter was taking a drink for himself without paying! The waiter justified, "I work here, and it's a worker's perk to receive without consideration to expense."

R' Yisroel explained that we are all living in an incredibly luxurious hotel. The sun and moon serve as bright lights, the trees and flowers create a beautiful backdrop, and the singing birds provide musical accompaniment. Hashem, *kevayochol*, the head waiter, serves us, and thus, everything we receive comes at a great cost. With just one plate of "*tzimmes*," one can be rewarded for all the goodness he has ever done and anything beyond that is considered the kindness of Hashem.

Accordingly, how can we even attempt to ask Hashem for everything we need – health, wealth, success, and happiness? The key is to be a "worker" in Hashem's "hotel". By serving Hashem, we can receive all His goodness and kindness for free. When we *daven*, if we focus on all our requests to be used as a tool to serve Him better, we can hope for a positive outcome.

The *possuk* in Tehillim (27:1) states: ה' אורי וישועי, *Hashem is my light and my salvation*. The Midrash (*Shocheh Tov*) expounds that אורי, *my light*, refers to Rosh Hashanah and ישועי, *my salvation*, refers to Yom Kippur. R' Leib *zatza* explained that on Rosh Hashanah we focus on Malchiyus, which illuminates the purpose of our existence. Malchiyus teaches that our mission in life is to bring honour to Hashem and recognise His Kingship, and with this understanding of our role, we acquire great insight and opportunity, which results in our salvation on Yom Kippur. Appreciating our function in this world, and Hashem's interest in our *avodah*, allows us to request life, prosperity, blessing and peace. As His "workers," we can merit "perks" and all we need to continue serving Him. Ultimately, once we have undertaken on Rosh Hashanah to dedicate our lives to serve Hashem, He then grants us atonement on Yom Kippur.

The *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah is to recognise Hashem's *malchus* and the purpose of our existence. As an extension of this, we can *daven* and hope to be granted a prosperous new year, since all that we are asking for is לְמַעַן ה' - for Hashem's sake, to assist us in serving Him better!

## פְּתִיבָה וְחִתִּימָה טוֹבָה

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