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יום כיפור

*Our Father, Our King*

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להצלחה ולהרחבה גדולה בכל ענינים



# The MUSSAR PROJECT

## DEVELOPING MIDDOS THROUGH THE LEARNING OF MUSSAR

### THE CLASSICS

Mesilas Yesharim · Orchos Tzaddikim · Chovos HaLevavos · Shaarei Teshuva · Maalos HaMiddos · Sefer Hayashar

"Hold fast to the study of Mussar; do not let go [Do not let yourself weaken even for a moment] guard it, for it is your [only purpose of] life."

(Mishlei 4:13[Gra])

"Everyone should fix a time to learn Mussar each day... Mussar is the cure to the yetzer hara."

(Mishnah Berura Se'if 1, Se'if Katan 12)

"One's wisdom will not be complete if he doesn't have Mussar. Just like the head is the main part of the body, so too Mussar is the main wisdom... When you see one who conducts himself with ethics, do not ask about his parents or his lineage because Mussar is the greatest lineage."

(Maalos Hamiddos, Maalah 18)

"R' Yisroel Salanter taught that the primary way to learn Mussar is to bring the ideals from the intellectual level to the emotional level, through emotionally repeating a line that speaks to you (for example: by singing it or visualizing it - with the intent of changing yourself for the better)."

(Shaarei Ohr, Summary of 9)

### Make this year's Kabbalato LEARN MUSSAR DAILY!

SUGGESTION: Keep a small Mussar Sefer by your bed and don't go to sleep until you've learned from it.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztz"l would advise people in the name of his father that **people should learn Mussar with their children from the age of seven. Even five minutes a day is enough...** Sefarim that are easy for them to understand, like Orchos Tzaddikim (Orchos Yosher, 8)

There was a Rosh Kollel against putting a Mussar seder into the Kollel schedule, claiming it constituted "theft". Rav Chaim said, "... If it is because he objects to Mussar, he should know that the Mishna Berura writes that learning Mussar is a daily obligation. And the Shaar HaTziyun writes (1, 26) that **learning Mussar is more important than learning Mishnayos...**" (Artscroll Orchos Yosher)".

Lilui Nishmas Rav Elchonon ben Gershon and Moras Rochel Leah ba Aharon HaCohen  
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יום כיפור

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

**Our Father, Our King**

**Contents:**

**Part I. Avinu - 3**

**Part II. Malkeinu - 8**

**Part III. Yom Kippur Attitudes - 12**

*Part I. Avinu*

**Learning About Teshuvah**

One of the themes of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva and Yom Kippur in particular is 'Avinu Malkeinu.' I'm not talking now about the formal prayer that we say after Shemoneh Esrei; I mean that it's a theme of the days themselves. 'Avinu Malkeinu' is an attitude that the Am Yisroel works on developing during these Days of Teshuva and then it's the last *tefillah* of Yom Kippur – right after *Neilah* we go away from this holiest of days with one more time shouting "Avinu Malkeinu".

Now, it's not a coincidence that these two words, Avinu and Malkeinu, are both used in the daily Shemoneh Esrei in the *brachos* of *teshuvah* and *selichah*. In all of the supplications of Shemoneh Esrei we don't find the words 'Avinu' and 'Malkeinu' in the same *brachah* – only here in *Hashiveinu* and *Slach Lanu*. Open up a *siddur* and take a look; it's the only place.

And that's a very important point because it's teaching us something about *teshuvah*. It's telling us that turning back to Hashem in *teshuvah*, that's the *brachah* of *Hashiveinu*, as well as the request for forgiveness, that's *Selach Lanu*, require one to acquire these two attitudes. *Avinu* and *Malkein* – it's two perspectives that a person who is asking for forgiveness must work to acquire.

### **Don't Bank on Forgiveness**

Now that might come as a surprise to many people – “Attitudes and perspectives?! I just want to do *teshuva*. I want to say ‘I'm sorry’ and seek forgiveness.”

But that's an error that people make because repentance and forgiveness are not formalities.

You know when you hand in your application for forgiveness so you might think that you're a pretty good fellow. After all, you went through the trouble of buying a ticket or a seat in the synagogue for Yom Kippur. And so you're also congratulating yourself for making the *teshuvah* request. It's like going to the bank; naturally you expect to get what you asked for.

But that's not how it works with *teshuva* and *selicha*. Because if you're talking to somebody who is just a face at a bank window, a teller, and you hand in your application, “I hereby declare that that I did *teshuva*; now forgive me,” that's not enough. Maybe it's something, a *miktzas teshuvah* perhaps, but even if it is, it's not the *teshuvah* and *selichah* we're looking for. To accomplish what we all want to accomplish on Yom Kippur, **כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם** – that it should be a day of wiping away our sins completely, there are important *attitudes* that we have to acquire.

### **Making Father Great Again**

Number one proviso is that it should be *Avinu*; you should be talking, not to a bank teller but to your Father. You must acquire the attitude of *Avinu* – Hashem is our Father.

Now, to American ears the word ‘father’ is almost meaningless. Everyone knows that Father's Day means very little in America; Mother's Day at least has a little bit of significance but Father's Day is almost entirely ignored. The attitude towards a father, unfortunately, has not been developed properly in Western society and therefore the *avodah* of *Avinu* is something that has to be developed.

Where to start? So the first thing is to understand that the emotion of speaking to a father is an emotion of seeking his love. The word *av*,

father, is the same word as *ahav*, love, only that the *hei* which is a weakly sounded letter, comes in between. And therefore אב and אהב are all part of the same emotion; the *av*, the father, means the one whose love we seek.

And therefore the *baal teshuva* must yearn to be restored to the affections of his Father. Just like a man wants to see his father – if you're a person who is of sound mind and let's say your father happens to be visiting in the neighborhood, you make it your business to see him; that's a measure of your love for your father – that's how a person, a healthy, stable person, should feel about his real Father.

### **Pangs of Lovesickness**

And if he sinned against Him and he's estranged from Him, he has pangs in his heart. Not that he bangs on his chest and says he has pangs; it actually hurts him and he wants to be reconciled. A son who had quarrels and he left his house for some time, so he thinks, "Look, it's my father. He loves me so dearly and he only wants good for me. Is it right I should be estranged from him? I really should beg his forgiveness and seek his love. I want him to look at me with favor once again."

That's what it means to come back to Avinu. "I put myself in a tiff with my Father; I broke off with Him – any sin is breaking off from Hashem – and I'm estranged from Him and so I want to regain His favor."

That's the point of *teshuvah*; not merely that we want our sins to be forgotten, that we don't want to be punished. *Kapparah* means more than that. The most important ingredient of forgiveness is achieving once again the love and favor of Hashem.

That's why when a person bring a *korban* it says that the result is וְנִרְצָה לוֹ – he will gain the favor of Hashem, to atone to him (Vayikra 1:4). Now, it could have just said 'it will atone upon him' – the offerings, whatever he does, will serve as an atonement. But no, it says וְנִרְצָה לוֹ – it's a gaining of the favor of Hashem, וְנִכְפַּר עָלָיו – and that's what *kapparah* means.

### **Our Forefathers' Father**

Now you have to have patience with me if this idea is strange to you but the truth is that our forefathers understood it this way. If we look in the Tanach we see that they weren't satisfied merely that Hashem would forgive them – forgiveness without His favor?! What is it worth?

You remember the story of the *eigel*, when the Bnei Yisroel sinned with the golden calf, so Hashem said that He's not going with them anymore; He said "I'll send a *malach*, an angel, to accompany you into Eretz Canaan. You'll be brought into the land and you'll get everything that I promised you, only that I won't go with you."

When the nation heard that, they were grief stricken. וַיִּתְאַבְּלוּ וְלֹא שָׁתוּ. אִישׁ עָרְיוֹ – they were in mourning; nobody had the desire to even put on their respectable clothing (Ki Sisa 33:4).

And Moshe spoke on behalf of the nation and he said, אִם אֵין פְּנִיךָ הַלְכִים, אֶל תֵּעָלְנוּ – "If Your face, it means if Your favor doesn't go with us then, אל תעלנו – don't take us out of here" (ibid. 15). If You're going to be estranged from us," he said, "so we don't want to budge from the wilderness. We'll just remain here until You reconcile with us. Because all the great promises of a fertile land, flowing with milk and honey, all the happiness, we'll conquer our enemies, all these things are meaningless to us if You don't go along with us." In those great days they understood that that's the success of a man, to gain the favor of Hashem; which means Hashem should like you.

### Orthodox Atheists

Now I know that nowadays we are very remote from this concept. For us, we consider a person special if he has gained a certain awareness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and to him Hashem is more than a word in the *siddur*. After all there are very many Orthodox atheists, people who in their hearts have nothing. It's קָרוֹב אֶתָּה בְּפִיָּהֶם וְרָחוֹק מִבְּלִיּוֹתֵיהֶם. Like the *navi* said, "You're close in their mouths, but far away from their insides" (Yermiyahu 12:2). And so if someone will work themselves up to the *madreigeh* that when he says *atah Hashem*, he feels that he's talking to an actual Somebody so we imagine that he's made it, that he's achieved everything already.

And the truth is that it is a big achievement. But when we talk about accomplishing forgiveness it's not enough though. Because Awareness of Hashem is still far away from the attitude of Avinu, of reconciling with our Father. And therefore, that's one of the very big jobs that we have to do on Yom Kippur – we try to reconcile with our Father. That's the best profit we can take away from the day of *kapparah*, the tremendous accomplishment of closing the distance that we made during the year and attaining His favor again.

## Creating Distance

That's what it means when we say to Him, סָלַח לָנוּ אֲבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ; *chatanu* does not mean 'we rebelled,' *chatanu* means we missed out, we lost. The word *cheit* means חָסֵר, to lack. Like Shlomo Hamelech's mother said to Dovid when she was concerned that someone else would seize the throne after Dovid's death: וְהָיִיתִי אֲנִי וּבְנֵי שְׁלֹמֹה חָטָאִים – *I and my son Shlomo will be chato'im*; it doesn't mean they will be sinners; it means 'we will be missing out.'

That's the real meaning of a *cheit*; that you're missing out on being close to your Father. Because when a person understands what the sin is, he feels a sense of loss, of estrangement from his Father. And so we ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu to wipe out that *cheit*, to wipe away the estrangement and accept us back.

And you should know that if *teshuva* is approached in this way, sometimes we can accomplish an achievement more than even before the sin. If your *teshuva* includes a feeling of humiliation – it means you despise your misdeeds because they caused you to lose the favor of Hashem – and now you want with all your heart to be accepted and loved by Him once more, so this new frame of mind, this desire to regain the attitude of Avinu is actually such a great achievement that sometimes a sin can accomplish for a person more than before he even sinned.

## Don't Scorn the Seeker

*Kapparah* means he wants to make up again with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He wants to come back and renew his covenant of loyalty to Hashem; he wants Hashem to love him. The details, all the *al cheits*, are important but we're asking for forgiveness on the details because we want *ratzon Hashem*. That in itself is a very big achievement, the desire to come back.

That's why we consider it an achievement when even a Jew who is *mechalel Shabbos* all year, a person who doesn't keep anything, but he has the good sense to come on Yom Kippur to the synagogue; and he stands with all the people even though he can't read Hebrew. People don't understand what a big thing it is. We look down on them – after all we know that it'll take a lot of *al cheits* for him to do *teshuva* – but actually it's a tremendous thing just to come to the synagogue. The mere fact that he comes in is a salvation for him because it's a sign that his heart is yearning to make up with his Father, at least by this one little sign, this small token of seeking his Father's favor. He still has a long way to go but that itself is

a great accomplishment. We want to be once more reconciled with our Father.

And that's the attitude you have to practice up on when we approach Hashem and ask forgiveness. We want to gain the feeling that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is our Father and we'll thereby deserve that He should want to take us back into His arms; like a father forgives a son. **סָלַח לָנוּ אָבִינוּ** we say; *Forgive us our Father, בִּי הָטְאָנוּ* – *because we have distanced ourselves*. And if we talk to Hashem as Avinu, our Father, He'll take us back; because when a father forgives a son, that's how it is.

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## Part II. Malkeinu

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### **More Attitude Required**

Now, as valuable as it is, this attitude of Avinu is not enough. Because on Yom Kippur another important perspective is needed. And that's why right after we say **סָלַח לָנוּ אָבִינוּ בִּי הָטְאָנוּ** we go on and say **מָחָל לָנוּ מַלְכֵנוּ בִּי פִשְׁעֵנוּ**. Because there's a second attitude that is essential for the *baal teshuva*; and that is *Malkeinu*: Hashem is our King. Not only do we seek His favor as our Father but we come before Him as our King begging for His forgiveness. And that's very serious business because a king means law and order; and law and order means that there are consequences to your actions.

Today of course that's news to people. Law and order? Even politicians when they run for office today they don't say that anymore; it's out of style. They're afraid of the ethnics and so today it's 'Law and Justice' or 'Law and Charity.' Whatever they say, other empty cliches, but it's not 'Law and Order.'

### **The Lawmaker**

But *Malkeinu* means law and order! It means the King is in control and nothing goes unnoticed. There's a system, a Torah system, that must be obeyed or else – or else there are consequences. That's how the King made this world, a place of law and order, of consequences.

That's why if a person walks out in an electric storm and runs across a field, there is a very good chance that a bolt of lightning will hit him. And when it does, there's no escaping the results. And if a man jumps off a roof, it's the law of nature, he's not going to fly. Gravity is a law of the King and there's no escaping the order that He established.

Now, the fact that sometimes you don't like that law, that sometimes you come into collision with the laws, that's not going to be an excuse. Just because you want to try to run through traffic and you don't like that law that two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time, it won't help you. That law functions and it functions perfectly; only you have to be careful that you shouldn't do anything that will invoke that law to your detriment.

Now, who passed all these laws? Who made such a law that a body in water has to sink? Why shouldn't a body in water float on top of the water always? Let him lie on top of the water, even though he can't swim, and he should be able to enjoy the scenery, look at the clouds and little by little he'll paddle his way to the shore. But no, it doesn't work that way – if a man will jump into the ocean and he can't swim, there's a law that he's going to go down; that's one of the laws that the King put into this world and you can't dodge it.

### **The Lawbreaker**

And we have to look at all of those laws and remind ourselves that the same thing applies to His laws in the Torah; if you go against the law there'll be the results that the law of Hashem requires. Whatever a person does he must know that there is no getting away with anything in this world. The law is the law and sooner or later everything and everyone will be placed in order.

And therefore, Malkeinu means a law and order that should cause fear in a person's heart. **סִמּוֹר מִפְּחָדֶיךָ יְיָ** – “*I have goosebumps because I'm so afraid of You,*” Dovid said. It means an actual dread, a shuddering.

The truth is that in ancient times this didn't have to be pointed out. Just the mention of the king brought dread into the hearts of the subjects. Even on dark back streets, people behaved because they knew that with a king there's no monkeying around. If the king said, 'Anybody who does this and this off with his head' it wasn't an empty threat. Every once in a while there were people who were brought to the public square and their heads were lifted off of their necks. And so when someone sinned against the King he wouldn't just read off his sins from a *machzor* and bang on his heart; he would throw himself down in front of the throne and beg for forgiveness. He'd cry copious tears.

### **That Fear?!**

And therefore when we talk about gaining the attitude of Malkeinu we have to forget about President Reagan and the Queen of England and

whoever else there is today. No, that's nothing. We have to look back to the days of old when the thought of the King used to bring terror into people's hearts. That's what it means *yiras Hashem*.

Now I know that people will argue with me. “*Yiras Hashem* means fear actually of punishment? Doesn't it mean awe at Hashem's greatness? Doesn't it mean *yiras haromemus*, awe and veneration at the sublimity of His *Shechinah*?” Big words they'll use; even bigger words than me.

And the answer is it means that too; but it most definitely includes plain trembling, plain dread of punishment. Not only is He Avinu and we desire to come back to Him in *teshuva* because we want Him to favor us, but we come back to Him because He's our King and a king means business; it means He has full power over men's lives and He visits retribution upon wrongdoers for their deeds.

### **The Real Deal**

All around us, we see what happens to people. We have to understand that nothing is by accident. There's no chaos in the world of Malkeinu. It's all the result of the Judgment of Hashem. Time and time again we have seen people who have done great wrongs and something later happened to them. Terrible punishments were visited on them. And just because people forgot what was the crime that this man had once done so they wonder why he was punished. But if you have a good memory, you'll look back and you'll see. Many times even in our days when the world is so darkened by error, even today we can see how many people have been given what they deserve by the Hand of Hashem.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is sending the death penalty constantly. A heart attack, a car accident, a crime committed in the subways or on the streets. Constantly, retribution is being visited upon men, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the One who's doing it.

When people transgress certain things in their youth and they never fully atone then someday suddenly will come *k'shoah*. There'll come a sudden misfortune, a black day, and it'll be collected. Whatever it is, what we have to know is that everything is done with justice. Nothing is forgotten.

### **Fleeing The Authorities**

Malkeinu means there's no escape. There's nowhere to run away. Like Dovid HaMelech said, אָנָּהּ מִפְּנֵיךָ אֲבָרָח, – “Where can I flee from before You? אִם אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁמָּה אֶתֶּךָ – If I'll go up to the heavens, You're there. Wherever I'll go, I'll find You” (Tehillim 139:7) It's a poetic form of saying, “Hakadosh

Baruch Hu, You are everywhere and wherever I go, I know there You are. So if I do something wrong, can I hide from You?"

So let's say you don't pay income tax for New York City. So you leave the city. You don't pay state income tax, you leave the state. You don't pay federal income tax, you take a plane and leave the country. The IRS after all can see a lot but they can't see everything. You can hide maybe in Switzerland or some other country. But if you don't pay Hakadosh Baruch Hu's taxes, where can You run away?

I'll go to Switzerland, and You'll be waiting for me there. I'll take a space rocket to the moon? There You are waiting for me. And therefore Malkeinu means to be afraid of Hashem and of the results of what we've done. Nobody can escape the fact that he rebelled against the King.

### **The Two-Faced King**

Of course, if you are still alive and you do *teshuvah* and you ask Him for forgiveness, that is something else. But otherwise there is no forgiveness. You'll get it in this world. And if you're unlucky enough not to get it here then it's very bad news. When a man dies with his sins, it is going to be very bad for him because Hakadosh Baruch Hu will then face him in a way that he didn't recognize in this world.

Reb Yisrael Salanter says that; he says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has two faces, one face is in this world, one face is in the Next World. In this world the face is the face of *chessed*, a kindly face. He's *maarich af* – He gives a chance again and again. But in the next world, Reb Yisrael said, it's all over. In the Next World Hashem shows the stern face of a judge, an unforgiving King. It's too late for forgiveness.

And so Yom Kippur is the day to climb out of that pit and say "Malkeinu!" It's the day to say "I recognize that I rebelled against Hashem Melech and I'm so afraid and so ashamed."

That's something to spend time considering on Yom Kippur, that the second emotion required for *teshuvah* is Malkeinu. It means to understand that Hashem is the King and to generate in your heart an understanding that you sinned not only against a word in the *siddur* and not only against a loving Father but you rebelled against a King. That's what it means **פִּשְׁעֵי**; Please Hashem! Please forgive me for sinning against You and not recognizing You as King.

### **How Low Can You Go?**

Because that's what a sin is – an *aveirah* cannot be committed when a man is aware that he is standing before the King. In the presence of a

monarch no one would make even the slightest movement that's incorrect. And if he does, it demonstrates that he is not in the presence of the King. And that is the greatest rebellion, when you say there is no king. אָמַר נֶבֶל גָּלְבוּ אֵין אֱלֹהִים – *The low fellow, says in his heart, 'There is no G-d'* (Tehillim 14:1). Because when he does something wrong, there is no question that for the moment, 'Ein Elokim' was in his heart.

Now you wouldn't say it in such crude words but in your heart of hearts that's what you're thinking. And eventually, even though he remains a *frum* Jew, he doesn't believe anymore in Hashem. It could be he is loyal to his nation, he is loyal to his *kehillah*, he continues to do *mitzvos*, but in his heart there is no King anymore. This man is finished with that; he is a *kofer be'ikar* in his heart of hearts. It doesn't pay for him to believe anymore. If he believed in Hashem, *oy vey*, he has a big load on his conscience. And so he pushes away thoughts of the King.

### **We Crown You Again**

That's why we come into the shul and we beg מַחֲל לָנוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כִּי פָשְׁעָנוּ; because we want to create for ourselves a new mind. Just like when we say סָלַח לָנוּ אָבִינוּ we're saying that's the condition of forgiveness, to acquire the attitude of a son to a Father and with that attitude we hope that our Father should favor us and we become eligible for forgiveness; so too if the man wants the King to forgive him for his rebellions so he must acknowledge that He is the King.

מַחֲל לָנוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כִּי פָשְׁעָנוּ means 'I understand that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge of the world and that there is no such thing as getting away with any crimes against the King.' We say to the King who passed all these laws, we say, 'Forgive us our King, for we rebelled against You.' We admit it. And therefore we ask Him, מַחֲל לָנוּ – to wipe out our disloyalty.

## *Part III. Yom Kippur Attitudes*

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### **Ancient Avinu Malkeinu**

Now, once you understand that these two attitudes of Avinu and Malkeinu are a prerequisite for *teshuva*, so you have to put effort into acquiring them. Don't imagine that it's easy to acquire. Just because you sit here now for an hour it doesn't mean you're finished yet. It takes time, it takes a lot of labor, a lot of thinking, to create a new mind.

And that's why it's so important to make use of the opportunities we have. And so during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva when we say Avinu

Malkeinu that's a good time to think about these ideas you heard here tonight.

Old-time Jews – I was told this by a rosh yeshiva in Europe – they didn't say the Avinu Malkeinu *tefillah* the way we do. You know, when we say it we want the end of it: הַדָּשׁ עָלֵינוּ שְׁנָה טוֹבָה or שְׁלַח רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְחוּלֵי עַמּוּךְ or whatever it is. That's what's important to us. But the old time Jews spent time on the first two words. *Aveeeeeenuuuuuu!* That's the important point! *Malkeiiiiiiiiinuuuuu!* That's the important point! And then they would finish quickly, שְׁלַח רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְחוּלֵי עַמּוּךְ.

That's how a rosh yeshiva once explained to me. The old-time Jews used to say the words Avinu Malkeinu loud and slow, and the rest, whatever it was they wanted of Him, they said fast; because the most important accomplishment is not the request – it's the achievement of feeling that He's your Father and your King.

### **Stand In The Corner**

Now it doesn't mean that when you're in shul, that's the only time. I'll tell you something that you'll think is a queer thing but it's good advice so I'll say it anyhow. Even not in shul, not on Yom Kippur; on a regular Tuesday afternoon if you'll stand in a corner when nobody is around and you'll say, "Avinu." Say it again and again. Say it a hundred times. And it's going to sink in after a while. The next day do it again. But this time say "Malkeinu." A hundred times. And not just to rattle it off. You're saying it slowly and you're thinking what the words mean

It's a very effective way. We learned that from Reb Yisroel Salanter, *zichrono livracha*. He says that when you repeat the great ideas, when you say these words over and over and you listen to what you're saying so in the course of time it's going to sink in. And so if you mean business, that's the way to do it. Say it till you mean it. It's worth the effort.

### **Congrats!**

Now after all this effort so you might think that you're entitled to *selichah mechilah*, that you deserve a pat on the back. After all, you're not merely putting in your application for *teshuvah* by saying the long *al cheits*. You're enhancing that application with the creation of a Torah mind; with attitudes that are prerequisites for real *teshuvah*. You're not approaching a bank teller anymore; you're approaching, *lehavdil*, a Father and a King. And so maybe now you can congratulate yourself. Your Yom Kippur was successful!

And that brings us to the final attitude we want to acquire on Yom Kippur. It's an attitude we're speaking about all year long only that we're not listening to what we're saying so it doesn't go into our heads. In the daily *tefillos* that we say every day we say בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שֵׁם – we thank You, Hashem, הַרְצָה בְּתְשׁוּבָה – that You want *teshuvah*.

Now we don't understand that. What does it mean that we're thanking Him? As far as we're concerned we think we're doing a favor if we do *teshuvah*. It's a gift from us to Hashem. Oh, how nice we are. We pat ourselves on the back for that.

### **Congratulating Him**

So along comes the *siddur* and it teaches us that we have it all wrong. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שֵׁם means we are bent-kneed in gratitude to You Hashem. In the holy language, *berech* means a knee. And *baruch* means, the One to Whom everyone must bend their knees in gratitude. And so *Baruch Atah Hashem* – we bend our knees to You, Hashem, for the gift of *teshuva*. We're thanking Him for accepting us back.

After all, when a person does wrong things, why should he be forgiven? הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחוֹטֵאת תָּמוּת – *a man who does a sin, he should die* (Yechezkel 18:20). How can a person expect forgiveness after estranging himself from the love of his Father? How can he expect to be forgiven after trampling on the law of the King of the world? Just because you're going to come along today and try to acquire these attitudes included in *Avinu Malkeinu* and ask forgiveness? Try that with a king of flesh and blood and see how far it'll go.

And yet, we're told that we *can* expect it. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is willing to accept repentance and forgive us. He's the *Rotzeh b'teshuva!* And so we say, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שֵׁם; Thank You Hashem for wanting my *teshuva*; for wanting me back!"

That's a good thing to think about the first *maariv* after Yom Kippur, even before you eat something. You're in a rush to go home to a meal but at least that one *bracha* say slowly. Oh, such an opportunity to come back to you! It deserves the greatest gratitude!

And so we say *Baruch Atah Hashem*, we thank You Hashem, *harotzeh*, because You accept *teshuvah*. We thank You. We didn't expect it. We don't deserve it. You're willing to accept us back again.

And not only He's willing but He even favors us. He smiles upon us if we do *teshuvah*. *Harotzeh* means it's a *ratzon*. He likes us! Oh, that's even more! We didn't think of such a thing. We were happy that He lets us

come back at all. But He takes us back with open arms. He welcomes us back!

### **He's a Marbeh**

Now, we have to know however, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not forgiving us only once. The truth is, He's *chanun*, He's a merciful King, a merciful Father. That's the next *bracha* in the Shemoneh Esrei after *haotzeh b'teshuva*: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שֵׁם הַמְרַבֵּה לְסִלּוֹחַ – We thank You, Hashem, the One who forgives very many things. Because we didn't only do one misdeed. Let's be honest; we sinned above and beyond.

It's only dishonest people who have good consciences. Like I always say, when you pass by a Reform temple on Yom Kippur, everybody is orderly. Nobody is shouting, nobody is weeping. You pass by a *shtiebel* or *yeshiva*, they are roaring with penitence and weeping. You see, you think, it's a sinful crowd in here.

The difference is this. In a *frum* place they have a conscience. The word conscience means con-science, which means they know, they know about themselves. In the other place you have no conscience; their conscience is dead. It's like a cemetery. In the cemetery on Yom Kippur nobody's weeping. Maybe in the Next World they are, but in the cemetery it's only silence under the heavy expensive tombstones.

### **Repeating the Past**

And so, we have to recognize וְהוּא רַחוּם יְכַפֵּר עוֹן וְהַרְבֵּה לְהִשְׁיב אָפוּ. How many times has He forgiven us?! Again and again He forgives us and that means we come to You not only bent-kneed but we're bent over in shame.

Imagine you come to somebody and ask him for a loan so he takes out \$50, "Here." Then next week, you're hard up again, you need the money. You're a little embarrassed, but you go again. Again he takes it out.

Next week you come again; this time you're more than a little ashamed. How many times can you bother a man?! But what can you do? The circumstances are forcing you; there's nobody else. So you go to him again.

### **Accounts Payable on Hold**

Now, when you thank him, it's not only for the last gift he's given you; you have to keep in mind all the gifts that he gave you. How many times did he do these favors to you? It's only a wicked mind that can be so ungrateful and thank just for now.

Each time, you come with the head more bent over; each time you're more contrite, you're more humble before Him. And that's why when we ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu to forgive us, and we thank Him, we have to know we have very many things that Hakadosh Baruch Hu already forgave us for in the past.

Don't think that these are old accounts that we settled already; that we canceled it out with our prayers, with our *teshuva*. No, nothing is canceled out. All the old bills are still lying there; only they are not going to be collected. But they're there.

### **The Attitude of Gratitude**

That's why the old Jews have to weep more than the younger Jews; because Hashem forgave them many more years. It's no harm for a young Jew also to weep when he asks for forgiveness but an older man even more. Another year passed by? You gave me another year, Hashem? Hoho, I'm more bent over to You.

Now you're coming back for another one? Every year he comes and asks for another one?! Hakadosh Baruch Hu might say, "Look, so many times I gave you another chance and you disappointed Me. You want another chance? Again and again?"

So you fall down on the ground on Yom Kippur and you beg, "Please give me another chance! I know it's ridiculous for me to ask You Hashem, but I have to have it."

And Hakadosh Baruch Hu says "Alright." תנון המרבה לְסֵלַח. You estranged yourself from Me again. And you rebelled against Me again. But since you're saying Avinu Malkeinu again and you mean it, so I'll take you back again."

And so as you are bowing your way out of Shemoneh Esrei, when you're finishing Yom Kippur, don't congratulate yourself that you deserve a full pardon for whatever happened. That's the wrong attitude. Instead you should feel full of gratitude.

That's also a good thing to think about in that first Shemoneh Esrei after Yom Kippur. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַשֵּׁם תְּנוּן הַמְרַבֵּה לְסֵלַח - We thank You Hashem! How many times You forgave us!

### **The Reconciliation Repast**

And when you go back to your home after *maariv* and you see that there's good food waiting for you, a big *seudah*, you'll know why it's there. On *motzei* Yom Kippur it's a custom of Jews that they make it a sort of

yomtiv – they go home, and they set a table and everybody is in a festive mood. It's not because you did such a great job on Yom Kippur and now you are enjoying the fruits of your labor. No, you're loving Hashem! You're celebrating that you're restored to Hashem's favor and you're once more recognized as a favored child and a loyal subject to the King.

And therefore you're so happy with regaining that favor, regaining that status as a loyal subject, that you're celebrating it. What a day! A day that I acquired the fundamental attitudes of Avinu and Malkeinu that are required for *teshuva* and *selicha*. And not only is He my Father and my King but He's willing to accept me back into His arms; He's willing to favor me once again. Ahh! The happiness of Yom Kippur!

And so while you're enjoying the good food – it's fun to eat again – so you make up your mind that all year round you want to maintain what you achieved today. This gain that you achieved, that you are reconciling with your Father and Hashem favors you and that the King has taken you back as a loyal subject, you're going to continue from now on all year and all your lives. I'm going to try as much as I can to maintain these attitudes that I gained today of Avinu and Malkeinu.

### Have A Gmar Chasima Tova

## LET'S GET PRACTICAL

### *Creating a Yom Kippur Frame of Mind*

As Yom Kippur approaches, I will spend the last few days preparing for that most important day by spending time thinking about what Avinu and Malkeinu mean. Using the ideas Rav Miller spoke about, I will *bli neder* spend one minute every day creating a mindframe of Avinu and another minute developing the Malkeinu mindframe. And then on Yom Kippur I will use those ideals as the background of my thoughts as I ask for forgiveness from Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

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# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

WITH RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

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Q:

What words of *chizuk* can you tell us today on the day after Yom Kippur?

A:

I recall the day after Yom Kippur in Slabodka. The Rosh Yeshiva, *zichrono livracha*, spoke to the *bnei yeshiva* in the morning after *tefillas shacharis*. The *bnei yeshiva* were going to leave to their homes soon – some would remain for *yomtiv* but many were going home to their families.

And this is one of the things that he said to us: “You labored very much on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. You put your hearts into your *tefillah* – you prayed with all your heart in the yeshivah and you were elevated and inspired. And you accomplished a precious achievement because to pray in a good place these three days is equivalent to three months learning. But it is important now to be on guard. The *Mesillas Yesharim* makes a statement: *ליצנות אחת רוחה מאה תוכחות* – *One thoughtless jest can overthrow the results of one hundred sessions of serious thought*. Let’s say you go someplace and you hear one hundred lectures on *yiras Shomayim*, on understanding, on *daas Hashem*. And after the lectures you sit in the company of *leitzim*, jesters, empty people, then you must know that you have lost all that you have accomplished. If you hear one foolish remark it can overthrow one hundred edifices of *yiras Shomayim* that took you a long time to build.”

Soon will begin the *yomtiv* of Sukkos and all the way through Simchas Torah it’s going to be days of happiness. So it depends how you’ll celebrate. If it will be a thoughtful celebration, *lisheim Shomayim* – of course you’ll dance, of course you’ll sing on *yomtiv*; of course you’re happy. *קול רינה וישועה באהלי צדיקים*. Who should be happy if not those who learn and those who keep the Torah?! They’re the ones in whose houses should always be the sound of song and there they should always be dancing. But if it deteriorates into wildness, into *hefkeirus* and frivolity, then all the achievements of Yom Kippur is lost. Yom Kippur is a very precious possession and we have to hold on to the effect of the day as long as possible.

TAPE # R-31

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