

ראה עמידתנו דלים וריקים

הרה"ג ר' אברהם נח טאפלן שליט"א

Standing as Paupers, Standing with the Klal

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SELICHOS open with **לך ה' הצדקה ולנו כושת הפנים** and the tone never lets up. **ראה**. אין לנו פה להשיב ולא מצח להרים ראש. **עמידתנו דלים וריקים**. Say the leshonos slowly and there is no way around it: before we have asked for a single thing, we have told the Ribbono shel Olam exactly who we are — paupers, with nothing in hand.

Chazal built the entire avodah of Rosh Hashanah on it. The Gemara in **כל שנה שרשה בתחילתה מתעשרת**: ראש השנה ט"ז ע"ב — a year that begins poor ends rich. What is a poor beginning? Rashi: **שישראל עושין עצמן רשים בראש השנה לדבר**. And Tosfos tells us why it works: **שמתוך שישאל רשים ולבם נשבר, מרחמין עליהם מן השמים**.

That is the whole cheshbon. Rachamim is for the rash. The week of Selichos before Rosh Hashanah is not a warm-up; it is the avodah of becoming, in earnest, dalim v'reikim.

Mei'idach gisa, a person can think to himself: I am not such a fallen person. After all, what is the ikar din of Rosh Hashanah about? It is about kvod Shamayim.

The Zohar takes up the pasuk in Iyov, **ויהי היום ויבואו בני האלקים להתייצב על ה' ויבוא גם השטן בתוכם**. Rashi there tells us what day it was: **אותו היום ראש השנה היה**. And the Zohar asks what **להתייצב על ה'** can mean — **וכי על ה' קיימי**? Rather, it is speaking of the moment when they stand in din, and it identifies the very first din, the one that contains all the rest:

בשעתא דאלין קיימי על דינא — דינא קדמא דכולא ביה: מאן הוא דלא יוקיר לשמא דקודשא בריך הוא, ומאן דלא יוקיר לאורייתא ולעבדוהי; אופ הכי מאן הוא דלא חייש ליקרא דשמא קדישא דלא יתחלל בארעא

Everything else is pratim. The klal hadin, the single point around which the entire din is ringed, is kavod — kvod HaKadosh Baruch Hu, kvod haTorah, kvod talmidei chachamim, and the daagah that Shem Shamayim not be mechulal.

Here the ben Torah has his question, and it is a fair one. What does this mean? I give my whole life to this. I am up at four o'clock every morning. I push gashmiyus to the side. I sit and learn the entire day. Is that not kvod haTorah? Is that not being magbir kvod Shamayim? If this is the ikar din — then what exactly do I have to worry about? Dalim, reshim — where do I fit into that language? A person can certainly think this way.

And this is what a person has to remember.

Look at the gedolei hador of every generation, and see how they understood how low they stood.

Moshe Rabbeinu, adon hanevi'im. HaKadosh Baruch Hu tells him: I am sending you to Mitzrayim to redeem My people. And Moshe answers, **שלח נא ביד תשלח**. The Ramban explains the words: send whomever You will send — I am the worst possible shliach, and anyone You choose will be better than I.

Is that how one speaks to the Ribbono shel Olam? "I am the worst"? Did Moshe Rabbeinu genuinely hold that he was the lowest of men?

Moshe Rabbeinu himself supplies the answer, in the tefillah we say every Shabbos, **תפילה למשה**: **מי יודע עוז אפך — בימים מועטים כאלה: וכיראתך עברתך** — in the seventy or eighty years a person is given — **מי יקנה לו לב**. To acquire a heart that knows what **עוז** is takes a lifetime of work. And Rashi continues on the second half of the pasuk: **כשם שאתה נורא, כך עברתך קשה ונפרע מן החוטאים**.

The Sforno sharpens it: **והנה לדעת עברתך וגודל עונשה, ראוי שנשער אותו כפי גודל המלך אשר המרו לו**. The measure of the anger is the measure of the King who was defied. Consider how much yirah is fitting before the Melech Malchei HaMelachim — and then consider what it means when a **בריה שפלה ובזויה** sins before Him.

וכיראתך עברתך

The extent of one's yirah before Hashem is the extent of one's din.

This is **וכיראתך עברתך**. As much yirah as there is before the Ribbono shel Olam, that much **עברתך** there is. Moshe Rabbeinu spent an entire lifetime on **מי יודע עוז אפך**; he grasped the gadlus of the Ribbono shel Olam. And precisely because of that — **שלה נא ביד תשלה**. I am truly not ra'uy. The smallest, subtlest chet he had ever committed, he understood in its full enormity.

The Radak on the pasuk says it in so many words: **וכמה הוא עוז אפך? כי זנחנו רואים כי כמו שיראתך באדם כן עברתך**; כלומר, כל מי שיראך יותר, עליו תבוא עברתך יותר כשיחטא מעט. וכן אמר בבני אהרן: בקרובי אקדש.

This is the pshat in HaKadosh Baruch Hu being **מדקדק עם צדיקים**. It is not arbitrary strictness. Precisely because you give so much to the Ribbono shel Olam, precisely because you are so mechaved Him, you understand His gadlus — and therefore you are the one who must understand **עברתך**. The ben Torah's question turns on its head: the closer a person stands to kvod Shamayim, the more he understands how much pachad there ought to be, and the more the language of dalim v'reikim is his own. That is Moshe Rabbeinu saying, in all sincerity, "I am the worst person possible."

One further point, a poshute pshat in Parshas Nitzavim — indeed the whole parsha turns on it: **הנסתרות לה' אלקינו והנגלות ערבם לנו ולבנינו זה בזה**. Rashi brings the Gemara that Klal Yisrael are **ערבים**.

Rav Aharon Kotler, in **משנת רב אהרן**, has several ma'amarim on this: the arvus is not only l'inyan onshin. It carries a chiyuv to feel the tzar of another Yid. He brings from the mekubalim, from the Ramak, that nishmas Yisrael is one — in the shores haneshamos it is all a single whole. It follows that another's tzar is my tzar. For reasons of His own cheshbonos, the Ribbono shel Olam placed it upon him; but a person cannot say, "It has nothing to do with me."

Rav Aharon brings the Gemara in **ע"א ע"א**:

תנו רבנן: בזמן שישראל שרוין בצער ופירש אחד מהן, באין שני מלאכי השרת שמלווין לו לאדם ואומרים: פלוני זה שפירש מן הציבור — אל יראה בנחמת ציבור. תניא אידך: בזמן שהציבור שרוי בצער, אל יאמר אדם אלך לביתי ואוכל ואשתה ושלוש עליך נפשי. ואם עושה כן, עליו הכתוב אומר: והנה ששון ושמחה, הרוג בקר ושחוט צאן, אכול בשר ושתי יין... מה כתיב בתריה? ונגלה באזני ה' צבאות: אם יכופר העון הזה לכם עד תמותן

And here Rav Aharon makes a gevaldige diyuk. This same pasuk — **ונגלה באזני ה' צבאות אם יכופר העון הזה לכם עד תמותן** — is the pasuk the Gemara at the end of **יומא (פ"ו ע"א)** brings for the **ד' חילוקי כפרה**, for the most severe of all: chillul Hashem, which is not mechupar by teshuvah, nor by Yom Kippur, nor by yissurim — **עד תמותן** only.

So one who does not join in the tzar of the tzibbur — his onesh is more severe than chayavei misos, more severe

than chayavei misos beis din?! Rav Aharon calls it a **davar nifla**:

הרי לנו כמה נורא, העוון הזה על מי שאינו מרגיש בצער הציבור, שכפרתו חמורה וקשה מחייבי כריתות ומחייבי מיתות בית דין; והדבר מבהיל עד מאד להתבונן בגודל החיוב להצטער ולבקש רחמים על הציבור

What is the bi'ur hadevarim? Perhaps this: it too is a chillul Hashem. Rav Aharon brings the Gemara in **ע"א ע"א** that when a Yid is in tzar, the Shechinah is in tzar — **קלני קלני מזורי**. And it does not concern me? One has to understand that the shleimus of Klal Yisrael exists only when all of Klal Yisrael stands together: **ויהי בישורון מלך** — only **בהתאסף ראשי עם יחד שבטי ישראל**. When the tzibbur is in tzar, kvod Shamayim itself is diminished, because the entire ma'alah of Klal Yisrael is that the whole tzibbur stand b'shleimus. If that does not bother me — if kvod Shamayim does not touch me — that too is a chillul Hashem.

Al kol panim, there is so much tzar — what is going on in Eretz Yisrael, the bnei Torah, the redifos, the parnassah, and so many cholei Yisrael. When we say **ראה בענינו** in Shemoneh Esrei, Rashi in **מגילה י"ז ע"ב** tells us we are not speaking of the geulah sheleimah, but of the tzaros that are **מתהוות תמיד**, that arise constantly. It should hurt.

And closer to home. In Lakewood, in our own city, some fifty girls, nebach, have no school — fourteen-year-olds from fine homes who already speak of themselves as a nothing, a nobody. Girls are graduating seminary by the thousands, baruch Hashem, and in a few short years half of them will be without shidduchim. And for the rest of us it is **שלום עליך נפשי** — my child is in school, my child has a shidduch, I have already made a chasunah. It does not touch me.

This is a tremendous tzar; be margish it. **ראה בענינו** — the oni that exists within Klal Yisrael. And when we go on to say **חוס ורחם עלינו וקבל ברחמים וברצון את תפלתנו**, mean it for all of Klal Yisrael, for the so many who are in tzar over refuah, parnassah, shidduchim, kavod.

To be margish in Klal Yisrael is a gevaldige, gevaldige hatzalah, and it works in the other direction as well: a person becomes an ish klali. Rav Shmuel Rozovsky, at the end of **זכרון שמואל**, brings in the name of Rav Yisrael Salanter — and the **לב אליהו** brings the same as he heard it from the Alter — that the tzibbur is assured, while the yachid stands in sakanah. But to the extent that a person makes himself an ish haklali — he worries for Klal Yisrael, he davens for Klal Yisrael, he does for Klal Yisrael both b'gashmiyus and b'ruchniyus — he is b'toch hatzibbur. His mishpat is the mishpat of the tzibbur, and that is a far, far lighter din.

This, l'anivus da'ati — and I speak to myself — is something we can take upon ourselves, at least a little, in davening: **ראה בענינו**. Look at the oni of Klal Yisrael; look at the tzar. And with that, may we all be zocheh to a **כתיבה וחתומה טובה**.