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

פרשת נצבים - וילך הכנה ליום הדין

אתם נצבים היום כְּלֶכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, רֵאשֵׁיכֶם שְׁבֵטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם, כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל. (דברים כט, ט)
You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d: Your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers – all the men of Yisroel. (Devorim 29: 9)

The *Sidrah* begins with Moshe, on the last day of his life, addressing every member of the nation, emphasizing that everyone, regardless of rank or status, is to enter into a new covenant. This covenant will unite them into an integrated unit, with the concept of *areivus* - responsibility for one another.

Rashi refers to the Midrash which explains the connection between this *parshah* and the preceding one of the *Tochachah*. Klal Yisroel were traumatised after hearing the *Tochachah*, which listed ninety-eight terrible calamities that would befall them if they abandoned Hashem and the Torah. Moshe now calmed their fears by saying, אתם נצבים היום, *You are standing today!* Despite causing anger to Hashem with their repeated failings in the *midbar*, Hashem had not abandoned them and they were still in existence. He used the phrase "היום" to reassure them, likening their existence to the existence of the day, which experiences both darkness and light. Just as Hashem had given them light in the past, He would continue to do so in the future.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* cites the continuation of the Midrash which explains that the word כְּלֶכֶם, *all of you*, emphasises the importance of unity for the future salvation of Klal Yisroel. It compares the nation to a bundle of sticks illustrating that when they are together as a whole, they are strong and cannot easily be broken. However, when they are divided, they are vulnerable and can be easily overcome. This teaches us the significance of unity for the collective survival of Klal Yisroel.

Based on this concept, R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm explains an apparent paradox in our approach to the Yamim Noraim. The Tur (*Hil. Rosh Hashanah* 581) writes: Usually, one who must appear in court on a capital offence wears sombre-toned clothing and is so fearful of the verdict that he does not groom himself carefully. Not so the Jewish people. Confident that Hashem will perform a miracle on their behalf and save them, they prepare for Rosh Hashanah by cutting their hair and donning white festive clothing. Furthermore, they eat and drink the finest delicacies on Rosh Hashanah.

The Tur elsewhere writes (*ibid*): There is a *minhag* to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah. This is based upon the Midrash which brings a parable of a district that owed taxes to its king. Having no choice, the king came with his army to ensure they would repay their debt. As he approached, the people sent a delegation of their most prominent officials to request mercy from the king. The king was compassionate and agreed to forgo a third of the bill. With the king and his army coming closer, they sent out a secondary delegation of average citizens to plead for respite. The king was benevolent and waived another third of the debt. When the king was even closer, all the townsmen went out to the

king, and he granted them a full waiver of that which they owed. So too, concludes the Midrash, regarding Hashem our King. All year we sin and accumulate debt, and Hashem has no choice but to come to punish us. On Erev Rosh Hashanah, the *tzadikim* fast, which causes Hashem to forgive a third of our sins. During Aseres Yemi Teshuvah, many more people fast, which causes a further pardoning of another third. And finally, when on Yom Kippur the entire nation spends the day fasting, this results in a total atonement. This Midrash indicates that we are not guaranteed survival and require much effort to ensure our atonement. How does this correspond to our confidence that we will be granted a miraculous acquittal?

R' Simcha Zissel answered by qualifying this self-confidence. As individuals, we should all be concerned about the judgement we will face on the Day of Judgement. We should dread the possible verdict, and should not rely solely on miracles. Confidence in Hashem's mercy is the exclusive privilege of the entire nation as a whole, not of individuals. Therefore, the best and most effective way for an individual to ensure their own well-being during these days of awe is by connecting themselves to the unit of Klal Yisroel and becoming an integral part of the nation. By working for the benefit of Klal Yisroel, one will be included in Hashem's beneficence to His people.

A person should strive to become an integral part of the nation or community so that they can share in its merit. This can be accomplished by teaching Torah to others or supporting its learning. Additionally, being part of a group dedicated to promoting spiritual growth in *Yiddishkeit*, or being active in the *kehillah* through acts of kindness and *tzedakah* initiatives, can ensure that one will be included in the collective success and avoid facing individual scrutiny.

As we approach the Yom HaDin, we should all strive to improve ourselves by fostering *achdus* and harmony with all members of Klal Yisroel. We should endeavour to be part of the nation as a whole, and with that be included in the miracle of guaranteed survival. By trying to the best of our abilities to be an integral part of the *kehillah* and Klal Yisroel by helping others in various ways, we can ensure that we share in the merit of the Klal.

פְּתִיבָה וְחִתִּימָה טוֹבָה

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