



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת נצבים - וילך הכנה ליום הדין

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם, ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם, כל איש ישראל. (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)

This week's *Sidrah* begins with Moshe Rabbeinu addressing every member of the nation on the last day of his life. Rashi refers to the Midrash, which explains the connection between this *parshah* and the preceding one, the *Tochachah*. Klal Yisroel was traumatised after hearing the *Tochachah*, which listed ninety-eight terrible calamities that would befall them if they abandoned Hashem and the Torah. Moshe calms their fears by saying, *אתם נצבים היום*, *You are standing today!* Despite provoking Hashem's anger with their repeated failures in the *midbar*, Hashem had not abandoned them, and they were still alive. Moshe uses the phrase "היום" to reassure them, likening their existence to 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.

R' Leib *zatza* raises important questions about this Midrash that merit further explanation. How could Moshe appease Klal Yisroel regarding the *Tochachah* when their fears were rooted in the belief that their future fate depended on their sins? Surely, Hashem does not show favouritism or excuse *aveiros*, as the Gemara (*Bava Kama* 50a) teaches: ויתרו חזיו, *כל האומר הקב"ה ויתרן הוא, Anyone who says that Hashem disregards sin, his life shall be disregarded!*

Moreover, how could Moshe reassure the nation by pointing out that, despite their numerous sins that angered Hashem, they had survived? The nation had faced real threats of extinction, and it was only through Moshe's desperate prayers that they continued to exist. Was this not a valid cause for concern? Indeed, throughout our history, we have endured extremely challenging periods, all of which were forewarned in the *Tochachah*. For example, the Holocaust was a terrible calamity that befell our nation and justifiably caused fear. How could Moshe calm the nation from fearing the many difficulties and painful chapters that actually occurred throughout our history?

R' Leib further explores the well-known statement of the Tur (*Hil. Rosh Hashanah* 581):

Typically, someone who must appear in court for a capital offence wears sombre clothing and is so filled with fear about the verdict that they do not groom themselves properly. However, this is not the case for the Jewish people. Confident that Hashem will perform a miracle on their behalf to save them, they prepare for Rosh Hashanah by cutting their hair and wearing white festive clothing. Additionally, they eat and drink the finest delicacies on Rosh Hashanah.

What is the cause for this confidence that we will all survive and receive a positive verdict? Certainly, the Tur does not mean to suggest there is no room for fear on the Day of the Judgement. As expressed in *Unesaneh Tokef*, it is undeniably a critical day for our survival and is a source of trepidation. Furthermore, the phrase "*confident that Hashem will perform a miracle on their behalf to save them*"

underscores the necessity of a miracle for our assured survival. What, then, is the understanding here? If we need a miracle, how can we be sure that we will merit it?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* refers to the well-known explanation of R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm, which helps to reconcile these seemingly contradictory messages. He distinguishes between the survival of the community and that of the individual; the community is assured of survival, while the individual may not be. R' Simcha Zissel therefore advises each individual that to merit a miracle, they should strive to help others. By doing so, they contribute to the community and will receive the guarantee of a collective salvation. (For further elaboration of this concept, see Issue #52.)

R' Leib offers an alternative perspective based on a teaching from the Tzeidah LaDerech, a talmid of R' Yehudah ben HaRosh. The Tzeidah LaDerech emphasises the concept of 'דְּבָקוּת בַּה' *clouseness and clinging to Hashem*, and explains that when an individual maintains a constant connection to Hashem, they are protected from harm. As the *possuk* states הַיּוֹם כָּלְכֶם חַיִּים אֱלֹקֵיכֶם, *And you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, are all alive today (Devorim 4:4)*. When a person remains close to Hashem, they merit life and goodness. Harm only comes when one diverts their focus from Hashem, allowing negative forces to take hold. (A notable example of this principle is the miraculous escape of the Brisker Rav and his family from Warsaw to Vilna during World War II. Their immense and continuous focus on clinging to Hashem protected them from danger as they fled from the Nazis.)

He explains that this was the reassurance that Moshe offered Klal Yisroel with the words: אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כָּלְכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם — *You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d*. Moshe was assuring the nation that there is a way to merit miracles and be saved from any adversity that may befall them. By standing לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם, they were being taught that closeness to Hashem has the power to protect them from all potential harm. Although Klal Yisroel had faced grave dangers and required miracles for their survival, there was a proven way to merit this miraculous protection: by clinging to Hashem.

During the Yomim Noraim too, a key way to achieve miraculous salvation is through closeness to Hashem and a connection to His Kingship. The more we engage with the themes of Malchiyus, the better our chances of being deemed worthy during judgement. Rosh Hashanah is referred to as יוֹם תְּרוּעָה, which can be interpreted as a day of רִיעוּת, *clouseness*, with Hashem and His Kingship, as stated in the *possuk*: וַתְּרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ, *And the friendship of the King is in him (Bamidbar 23:21)*.

We face significant dangers, and there is much reason for concern and trepidation, as we require a miracle for our survival. However, we have a means to achieve this: דְּבָקוּת בַּה'. By strengthening our connection to Him and focusing on Him as our King, we can merit salvation.

The Seforim teach us that the word אֶלּוּל is an acronym for אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי, *I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine (Shir HaShirim 6:3)*, indicating that these special days of Elul are particularly auspicious for achieving closeness to Hashem. Let us strive to utilise this opportunity to draw closer to Hashem, which will facilitate a favourable outcome in judgement.

כְּתִיבָה וְחִתִּימָה טוֹבָה

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