



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

אבינו מלכנו – עשי"ת

אבינו מלכנו חטאנו לפניך, אין לנו מלך אלא אתה, עשה עמנו למען שמך, חדש עלינו שנה טובה, וכו'.
(תפילה של עשי"ת)

Our Father, our King, we have sinned before You; we have no other King other than You; deal kindly with us for the sake of Your Name; inaugurate upon us a year of good life, etc.

(Tefillah of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah)

The *tefillah* of מלכנו אבינו is based upon an incident that occurred during the era of the Mishnah when R' Akiva formulated this *tefillah* and it immediately began to rain. We have a *minhag* from the *Kadmonim* for this powerful and moving *tefillah* to be said twice daily during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. The reason for this is that this is the time when we are beseeching Hashem to give us a favourable judgement. R' Leib Chasman *atzal* in Ohr Yohel writes that there are two feelings we must bear in mind when davening this exceptional *tefillah*.

1) We entreat Hashem with two different titles: אב, *father*, and מלך, *king*. Two elements are being mentioned here. A father has the greatest desire to bestow goodness on his child but he cannot always do so. On the other hand, a king has the power to grant his citizens anything they may desire, but he does not always wish to do so. In our time of need, we approach Hashem from both aspects. We turn to Him both as our Father who wishes for the benefit of His child and as our King who has the power to fulfil all our requests.

2) In Shmuel (I Chap. 14) we find the episode of Yonason eating honey whilst being unaware of the oath his father Shaul had decreed on the people. The *possuk* relates ומת יונתן ויאמר העם ויאמר שאול וכו' מות תמות יונתן. ויאמר העם ויאמר שאול וכו'. ויאמר העם ויאמר שאול וכו'. ויאמר העם ויאמר שאול וכו'. ויאמר העם ויאמר שאול וכו'. *And Shaul said, "... You must surely die, Yonason." But the people said to Shaul, "Shall Yonason die, he who has achieved this great salvation for Klal Yisroel ..."* So, the people redeemed Yonason and he did not die. Seemingly this event is difficult to understand, Shaul was the father of Yonason, so why was it necessary for the people to redeem him? The answer is that even though Shaul was his father, he was also the king and a king needs to uphold his decrees without showing any favouritism even to a close family member. Hence, only the people could save Yonason.

During these days of Awe when we are approaching Hashem and begging for our lives, we must realise that He is both our Father and our King. True Hashem is our Father who wishes only the best for us, but He is our King too, and the King cannot circumvent the laws and policies of His kingdom for anyone. With this, we comprehend that we cannot and should not solely rely on His mercy, rather it is incumbent on us to act and do something more. What does Hashem desire from us? *Teshuvah*. From no one other than Hashem, we know that this will be successful, as the *possuk* in Yechezkel (33:11) says: חי אני נאם ה' אם אֶחָפֵץ בְּמוֹת הַרְשָׁע כִּי אִם בְּשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִדְרָכּוֹ וְחַיָּה; *As I live – the word of Hashem – (I swear) that I do not desire the death of the wicked one, but rather the wicked one's return from his way, that he may live.* Hashem desires our return and has promised that through *teshuvah* we will live.

With this, R' Leib Chasman explains the opening verses of *Avinu Malkeinu*. Firstly, we admit our sins - *הִטְאָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ*; we then recognise that Hashem is our King and therefore cannot rely solely on His mercy to redeem us - *אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֲלֵא אַתָּה*. We then ask Hashem to accept our *teshuvah* as He promised (with His Name) - *עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ לְמַעַן שְׂמֹךְ* - and finally, by fulfilling *teshuvah*, we have a justification to request that He grant us a good new year - *חֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה*.

We say in the daily *Shemoneh Esrei* *כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ מִלְּכֹנוּ*, *מַחֵל לָנוּ מִלְּכֹנוּ*, *כִּי הִטְאָנוּ*, *סָלַח לָנוּ אֲבִינוּ* *כִּי הִטְאָנוּ*, *Forgive us, our Father, for we have erred; pardon us, our King, for we have sinned*. Here too, we find two references to Hashem, as being our Father and our King, what is the reason for this? Furthermore, what are the different expressions of sin mentioned here?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains these phrases, based on understanding the different terminologies given for sin. The word *הִטְאָנוּ* denotes sins done in error, while *פָּשַׁעְנוּ* refers to sins done intentionally and wilfully. A father has a child's best interests at heart and experiences pain by witnessing any unbecoming behaviour or bad character traits his child displays. Even an accident or sin committed unintentionally will be of concern to him since this portrays his child's lack of development. However, a king is only interested in the honour of his kingdom and that all his citizens abide by his policies and regulations. Only an act borne out of disobedience and rebelliousness will distress the king. Accordingly, whilst a king may ignore wrongdoings done unintentionally since they show no sign of disregarding the King's rule, a father will still be displeased by any lapse, since he wishes the child to perfect himself in every way possible. We therefore admit *הִטְאָנוּ* *כִּי הִטְאָנוּ* *כִּי אֲבִינוּ* - even our accidental wrongdoings require forgiveness from Hashem - our Father, who is pained by His child's mishaps. And for our sins done with intent, we say *מַחֵל לָנוּ מִלְּכֹנוּ* *כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ* - we recognise that Hashem is our King who is concerned about any affront to His rulership indicated by sins done wilfully.

Let us bear in mind these different facets in our relationship with Hashem, appreciating how our behaviour must live up to His standards and we must return to him. With this, may Hashem in turn, as our Father and King, bestow upon us untold goodness for the coming year.

גַּמְרַת חֲתִימָה טוֹבָה