



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

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פרשת נצבים – ראש השנה

וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ עֲלֶיךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וְכוּ'. וְשָׁבַת עַד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלוֹ כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִּי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם וְכוּ'. (דברים ל, א - ב)

It will be that when all these things come upon you – the blessing and the curse that I have presented before you ... and you will return to Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today ... (Devorim 30:1-2)

In this week's *Sidrah*, after the fearsome warnings of the consequences that will befall Klal Yisroel if they are disloyal to Hashem and His Torah, the Torah focuses on the eventual benevolence that Hashem will bestow upon His people when they repent.

After mentioning that Klal Yisroel will return to Hashem - וְשָׁבַת עַד ה' - *and you will return to Hashem*, the *parshah* continues, stating אֶת לְבָבְךָ אֶת לְבָבְךָ וְיָמַל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת לְבָבְךָ, *Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart* (30:6). Furthermore, the *posuk* continues: וְהוֹתִירָךְ ה' וְכוּ'. וְהוֹתִירָךְ ה' וְכוּ'. *כי* - *You shall return and listen to the voice of Hashem ... Hashem will make you abundant ... when Hashem will return to rejoice over you for good ... when you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to keep his mitzvos ... when you shall return to Hashem, your G-d with all your heart and soul* (30:8-10). These *pessukim*, which describe various stages in the *teshuvah* process that Klal Yisroel will experience, may seem repetitive. This raises the question: what different aspects of returning to Hashem and His Torah are being addressed here?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* offers an explanation based on a concept from the Sefer Akeidah. In Parshas Ki Savo, various *berachos* are bestowed upon Klal Yisroel when they adhere to Hashem and the Torah. The Sefer Akeidah raises a question regarding the repetitive theme in these passages, where Klal Yisroel is blessed for listening to Hashem and performing the *mitzvos*. He responds by exploring the different levels of fulfilling the *mitzvos* and the corresponding rewards for each level.

There are three stages in the fulfilment of *mitzvos*. The first stage is when a person performs *mitzvos* without understanding their purpose, merely following the guidance of a teacher. In the second stage, the constant performance of *mitzvos* leads a person to internalise these actions. Finally, in the third stage, once one has attained true understanding and appreciation, their *mitzvos* are performed most optimally and completely. To summarise: 1) performance, even without understanding; 2) the development of internalisation; and 3) the ultimate way of fulfilling *mitzvos*.

The Sefer Akeidah encapsulates these three stages using the terms עֲשִׂיָּהּ and שְׁמִירָה, שְׁמִיעָה. The initial performance based solely on instruction is referred to as שְׁמִיעָה, *listening*; the second stage of internalising and gaining understanding is termed שְׁמִירָה, *guarding*; and the third stage of ultimate performance is called עֲשִׂיָּהּ, *doing*. He elaborates that the various blessings correspond to individuals

who have reached different stages in their Avodas Hashem, described by the above terms, as will be explained.

The initial rewards mentioned are financial success and peace from adversaries, both of which are essential for someone at the beginning of their spiritual journey. Since learning effectively from a teacher or *sefer* requires peace of mind, which arises from a solid financial foundation and harmony with those around them, Hashem assures this (28:2-8). Secondly, anyone who is advancing by internalising the purpose of their actions will merit Hashem's affirmation of the Yidden as His holy nation, leading all the nations of the world to revere Klal Yisroel as the 'עם ה' (28:9-11). Finally, those who have transformed themselves and can perform *mitzvos* fully are deserving of a deeper blessing. They will receive a profound and public demonstration of Hashem's goodness and acknowledgement of their elevated status. Hashem will open the heavens and bestow upon them every conceivable good, granting them dominion over the world in an extraordinary manner (28:12-13). Upon careful examination of the *pessukim*, one can see that these three levels of reward correspond to the three phases of עשייה, שמירה, and שמיעה.

With this insight, the Rosh Yeshiva explains the levels of *teshuvah* outlined in our *Sidrah*. The first level is described by the phrase 'אֱלֹקֶיךָ וְשִׁמְעֶתָ בְּקוֹלוֹ וְשָׁבָתָ עַד ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ וְשִׁמְעֶתָ בְּקוֹלוֹ, which signifies the performance of *mitzvos* when guided by a teacher. The second stage in the process of transforming one's soul aligns with the phrase 'וּמַל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֶת לִבְּךָ, which metaphorically describes the act of renewing one's heart and being. Lastly, the phrase 'וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתָיו ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּקוֹל ה' וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתָיו ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּקוֹל ה' וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתָיו ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּקוֹל ה' represents the stage of ultimate עשייה, performing the *mitzvos* in their optimal manner. The *parshah* of *teshuvah* then concludes with the *possuk*: 'כִּי תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחָקְתָּו הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֶפֶר הַתּוֹרָה: הִזָּה כִּי תִשׁוּב אֶל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ (בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ) (insinuated by בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ).

As we strive to improve ourselves during these meaningful days of *teshuvah* and closeness to Hashem, we should use the lesson above as a guide for returning to Him and His *mitzvos*. Initially, one should perform the *mitzvos* even without fully understanding their reasoning and depth, as this will lead to a transformation of the *neshamah* and progression towards the ultimate Avodas Hashem. May we be *zoche* to attain true *teshuvah* and, in turn, merit the incredible assurances that Hashem promises for Klal Yisroel. This will culminate with the final and complete *teshuvah* in the future days of Moshiach, where everyone will recognise Hashem's absolute Kingship and Sovereignty.

פְּתִיכָה וְחֵתִימָה טוֹבָה

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